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BHAI MAHNGA :
OR THE
SEARCH AFTER TRUTH.

TRANSLATED
(ORIGINAL IN PUNJABI)
WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR
i.e.,
THE KHALSA TRACT SOCIETY, *
AMRITSAR.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFATORY NOTE.

In presenting to the public this rendering, in English language, of the story of Bhai Mahnga and Mai Suhagbai, on the auspicious occasion of the Coronation Darbar of His Imperial Majesty King George V, Emperor of India, no special apology seems necessary.

At a time when the prophecy of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, is being literally fulfilled by the Coronation Darbar of a British Monarch at Delhi, where Aurangzeb had objected to the liberty of the Satguru in looking towards the South-west direction, a story of the selfless manner in which Sikh Gurus and their Apostles had worked, midst most adverse circumstances and public prejudices, should come just in the fitness of things.

Should it prove of consolation to even a single of the thousands of multitudes that are assembling at the Imperial Town, the labours of its original author and present translator shall be amply justified.

The present rendering is from the story of our hero as given in the publications of the Khalsa Tract Society of Amritsar, and the translator claims absolutely no merit in it. He has simply tried to keep to the letter and spirit of the original, and if

he has anywhere failed to convey the right sentiments of the original author, as he feels he must have, it is due to his own want of grasp of the high spirituality of the original work.

It may here be pointed out that the story may not be considered fictitious because it is narrated in the form of a novel. It is based on historical facts, recorded in Sikh national chronicles, though in a very crude form.

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ

BHAI MAHNA .

I.

*I wander in countless directions in search
of Love of God ;*

The Five Evils trouble me, how to subdue
them ?—Phuneh, M. 5.*

It was the month of Sawan (July-August), yet—"Sawan is the son of winter" should rains set in. A storm of rain was sweeping over the country. The clouds, full of watery vapours, were drifting along the sky in huge dark masses, and had concealed the sun for a full unbroken period of three whole days, so that the people were well nigh forgetting as to when it had last shone. Even as the clouds of Egotism shut out a vision and realisation of the Divine and make the tiny human mind doubt even His High Existence.

* In Indian spiritual systems, all Evils have been grouped under five main heads. Some of them may fall under more than one head, but the main Elementary sins have been fixed as five only, and all other sins, as if, flow from them. They are Passion, Rage, Attachment, Avarice and Ego.

Though the setting in of the monsoons had followed immediately upon one of the hottest and dreariest summers of the Punjab plains, and had, when the rains had first started, refreshed scorching eyes and soothed boiling hearts, yet three days' continuous downpour produced a semblance of winter and a desire for use of warm clothing was manifesting itself. Getting drenched in rain set one's teeth achattering. Air was so laden with water that everything got moist. Constant dripping made all houses damp to their innermost recesses, streams of water ran along the roads and streets, and one could only wade through mud ankle deep in the bazárs. All business was at a standstill, and the markets appeared deserted, except of course at the liquor shops, where, however, the process of general "warming" had produced practically an appearance of a festival. Even courts and public offices were closed, for work had become impossible.

Amidst a general uncomfortable sense of physical and mental depression, created by the shuddering chill which was engendered by a piercing and restless wind, and penetrated to the warmest blood, it was Innocent

Nature alone, which presented rather a lively appearance. In fact, of the entire creation of God, ungrateful man alone, who had previously been praying for rain, started murmuring and invoking the mercy of the gods.

As for nature, it was all lively. The dust deposits on trees and plants, left by the dust-storms of June and July, had all been washed off, and the beautiful variegated hues of green and pale green came out in all their natural glory. A violent blast of wind blew the tree-tops to and fro and occasioned a friction amongst the branches, which, along with the drip drip of rain-drops on their leaves and from them on the ground below, produced a natural music of an exquisite taste, while birds appeared singing to the tunes of nature thus started. Every now and then, the deep rumbling of the clouds and an occasional peal of thunder served for a tambourine. In fact, to a mind, for whom the book of Universe was open, the entire nature seemed singing the celestial music of God's Own Creation.

On this day of heavy rain and piercing wind, when the ungrateful possessors of world's wealth were revelling in luxurious and

richly furnished and draped saloons, in utter forgetfulness of the bounties of Him Who had endowed them with the same, a Sadhu was sitting on the top of a small mound under no other protection but that of a *peepul* tree, apparently in deep contemplation and with closed eyes. In front of him were sitting a man and a woman, who, exhausted by sitting upon the spot and waiting for the Sadhu to open his eyes, since long before dawn, were now thinking to leave for home. Without uttering a word, they settled between themselves by signs to leave the place, quietly got up, bowed to the Sadhu and started. When they had walked away for about half a mile, the lady addressed her companion in a most plaintive and anxious tone—

“My dearest lord,” she said, “we have committed a very serious mistake. Since 3 o’clock in the morning we have suffered all the inconveniences of an inclement weather, and now we have lost patience and have left. Perhaps the holy man was only putting us to trial, and we may not thus have lost all our hopes by having lost patience at the last moment. Who knows the Mahatma might not just

have opened his eyes and showered blessings on us. Should you so will it, let us go back."

But this request was not granted by her husband, and both continued on their way home.

It was after sunset that they reached home, where they washed and changed their wet clothes. They then sat for a while at the fireside and took some refreshments, while they talked on various matters. They were yet thinking out plans for their future prospects, when the *yogi*, with whom they had passed the whole day some miles off, came in, extended his hands to them, and said, in a voice, full of compassion, "I am highly pleased with ye, my children! Ye have suffered tribulations like ascetics. Now, in all grace, shall I bless ye with whatever ye would ask!"

Who could, at this moment, measure the amount of happiness caused to this couple by the visit and graceful remarks of the *yogi*? They offered him the best seat and served to him the best of their dishes. After the repast was over, the *yogi* again offered to bless them with whatever they desired. On this, the husband prayed to be

raised to *yogi's* own spiritual level, and the wife asked to be blessed with a son !

As both had asked for different boons, they were required to attend on the *yogi* separately, one after another. The husband was first admitted, and the *yogi* talked to him, up to 11 o'clock in the night, on subjects relating to the Renunciation of the World, without which, he said, no spiritual advancement could be made. The discourse was so impressive that the earnest man, in search of the Divine, felt sincerely penitent for having wasted so many years of his precious life, and decided to renounce all his earthly belongings and connections, including his wife, the very next morning, and retire to the submontane tracts beyond Gorakhpur and sit there in contemplation to reach the Divine.

When the *yogi* was left alone the woman came in, and, with her, the *yogi* discoursed for about three hours. The subject of discourse was the greatness of the *yogis*, who, he said, controlled the universe and its laws. The essence of the arguments, which specially concerned the woman's request, was that she could only be blessed if 'graced' by a *yogi*. The woman could not at first

follow the arguments advanced and could not comprehend the vague expressions purposely used, but after some time she saw through the object of the *yogi*, in basely and wickedly trying to take advantage of her weakness in asking for a son. She had put faith in him as in a god, but this mean adulterer, masquerading as a servant of God, shamefully advised her, in language, however suppressed yet understood at last, to sell herself to him in search of a son.

Could it, dear reader, be wondered at, that religion is sinking into the quicksands of criminal apathy, in the East as in the West? When it be well-known that there is even a single Sadhu who is guilty of such unnameable sins as should cause him to be publicly whipped, and that, notwithstanding this, he is allowed, like a bull set at liberty for breeding purposes, to roam about in the country and engage the devotion of innocent and confiding people, could it then be surprised at that the laity should begin to look upon these self-sanctified exponents of religion with suspicion, if not with absolute contempt?

This rascal of a Sadhu was still weaving his web round the neck of this innocent lady, when the truth flashed across her mind. But she controlled her feelings for the time. The wit of a woman, however simple, comes to her aid, immediately when her honour be at stake ; and before the scoundrel, holding the place of an honoured guest at her house, could know of it, our heroine found an excuse to leave his presence, and at once reached her husband who was waiting for her in the other room, all the while sinking with himself in contrition and dreaming of passing the rest of his days in the low-lying wastes of the Nipal Tráí. And then,—oh, then what heart-rending scene ensued ! She wept bitterly. Sorely shocked and heart broken, she related the whole story to her husband, and then added, in extreme anguish of mind—

“ Oh ! the soul of my soul, for twelve years have we wandered about ! In vain have we wasted all these years ! We have yet found not a single sage, who may either show us the way to the Lord of the Universe, or work a miracle to bless us with a son ! We have followed every one that hath come

in our way; we have served him to our hearts' satisfaction; but in the end he has shown himself only enamoured of our wealth, our beauty and our services! Whoever is in need of satisfaction from us, my lord, how can he be our benefactor? Let us then give up this search after an impossibility, for a real sage existeth not in the world! Yes, my lord, attend thou to thy business and I shall look after our household and domestic affairs. Ridicules of our society have we suffered in perfect patience, while we were wandering about like maniacs in search of a *guru*! Our wealth and energies have we wasted ungrudgingly, but all in vain, dearest mine! Let us then now return to our secular affairs! Yes, adieu, my lord, to spiritual longings!"

This narrative of the scandalous conduct of the *yogi* by her wife simply shocked the husband. He at first hesitated to believe it. But she was not only his wife but for twelve years had she acted as his trusted companion in his wanderings after a spiritual guide. It was impossible not to believe in her word. Never had they disagreed before. They were right halves of each

other, happily mated to fulfil the higher possibilities of their joint natures. The husband was completely disabused of the false impressions that were made upon his mind by the *yogi*, and the next morning the venerable guest was given a quiet farewell departure.

This incident left the unhappy seekers after bliss to the freedom of their own meditations. They were entirely bewildered and chaotic. Dumb and despairing, they sank, as it were, within themselves, chilled with inexplicable misery. They felt themselves quite lost in the wilderness, like the shipwrecked traveller, whose fate had by chance drifted him and landed him upon a dreary island, uninhabited by a single life. They had broken all ties of attachment with those related to them in this world, in their search after truth; and the latter too had finally given them up as utterly lost. No companion on their spiritual journey had yet been found, nor had they yet anywhere found shelter and peace for their wandering souls. Is not this condition sufficiently lonely and perplexing?

How well hath Bhikha described the sentiments of one in spiritual thirst :—

I have been searching after a real sage, and
have seen many a Sadhu ;

Yea, many Sanyasees and mendicants, as well
as sweet-tongued Pundits ;

For a full year have I wandered about, but
nowhere did I get peace ;

Tall talk I heard a good deal, but none gave
me happiness ;

What should I say of those that are engaged
in other than God's name ?

Guru hath been found by me, O Bhikha : I will
now live according to Thy Will !

So miserable and forlorn was now the vague mental condition of this couple, that they began to be weary of their lives. *Sanyasees*, *byragees* and *sadhus* of numerous other denominations had they seen and served most sincerely, but they had found all of them as merely men of tall talk and no deeds. Hence consolation they had found nowhere. They had gone even to the length of travelling all the way from the Punjab to Ajmere, where Chishti Faqirs had their head-quarters, and had felt no hesitation in serving Muhammadan 'devotees ;' but peace of mind they obtained not. This was their last

attempt, wherein they were not found wanting, but the *yogi* proved an *ayogi* ! *

O Farid ! Twenty friends to talk to, but not
one real friend even if searched after ;
My mind yet smouldereth like cowdung, in
search of my Beloved !

* Devoid of all qualifications of a *yogi*, which term means literally one united with the Supreme.

II

Listen, O large-eyed woman, to the high spiritual words !

First know the thing and then deal with it.

Discard Evil and welcome Virtue !

Use the method, O woman, by which thou mayst acquire Friends !

Devote thy soul and body to Friends whose smile is True !

Attach not thyself with what seemeth transient !

May I be a sacrifice to those, Nanak, that have known this !

Mahnga was the name of the seeker mentioned in the last chapter. He lived in Lahore in the middle of the sixteenth century, and the above incidents happened when Guru Amardas, the third Guru of the Sikhs, was presiding over them at Goindwal. He was an only son of his parents and was brought up in plenty. Wealth he had in abundance. His wife was named Suhago, whom he had married at ten years of his age. At the age of eighteen, he interested himself in spiritual search. For twelve years

after this, he had been wandering about in that search, but all in vain. His wife was desirous of having a son, and he himself wanted Emancipation. Now, both blessings were believed to lie in the hands of men of high spiritual attainments. So both started together to a common destination, though with different objects, for both were to be found at the same market. Thus they both became companions to each other on their journey to where their respective desires could be fulfilled. Now it had so happened also that by constant attendance, with her husband, at spiritual discourses, a desire for spiritual emancipation had taken root in the mind of the lady as well. She thus became a true mate and companion to her husband, and cheerfully took part in all the efforts that he made in search of a Guru. Pity that their troubles and self-inflicted privations for a period of twelve years had all gone in vain ! They got consolation nowhere. They were looking for a true Sadh, but Sadh they found not. Bhai Gurdas has said—

Peace ! No one giveth but a Sadh !

Sadh ! None appeared to exist in the world !

Now, after the treacherous conduct of the *yogi*, these two "seekers" were afflicted with unlimited *vyrag* *. To them the world appeared a place of suffering. Their wealth and their houses and mansions appeared frightful. At times, they thought of setting fire to them. In utter loneliness, they would cry, and for hours keep on crying. Life was desolate for them. It had no charm. At one time, they went so far as to resolve to drown themselves in the Ravi and thus end their existence and with it their mental troubles. What use to live when life could give no consolation. Sometime a whole day would fly away without these two despairing and desperate people leaving their beds, and for days no food would be taken. For days they brooded over their miserable condition, and yet for them the problem remained as unsolved as ever.

This state of affairs became known in the society. Though they had no real friend in their social circle, they having themselves ignored all ties of kinship and affection, yet, in order merely to keep appearances now in their affliction, their relations began

* The opposite of *rag* or attachment to the world.

visiting them, when they talked to them all sorts of sympathising and pitiful platitudes. These would act like salt on their heart sores.

Thus nearly a month passed and there was no change in their mental attitude. Suhago had a distant cousin, who was a resident of Goindwal and had since some time established herself in Kasur. This lady was a poor widow of about 45 years of age, was of gentle temper and a Sikh in her religious persuasions. She happened to be in Lahore on business, when she was told, by a relation, of the condition of Suhago and her husband.

Mai Malan, for that was the name of this Sikh lady, hastened to visit her distant cousin, and spoke to her unostentatiously. The manner of her talk gave Suhago some slight consolation, till the seal of her silence was entirely broken, and she unburthened her mind to her.

The story of their repeated attempts and failures, followed at every failure by the despondency and moroseness, which had become peculiar to their natures, excited great pity for them in the delicate heart of Mai Malan. She spoke to them most lov-

ingly and showed them the fullest measure of sympathy. She also excited fresh hopes of success in their minds, and encouraged them in the field of their search. "It was impossible," she said, "for people of their earnestness not to succeed in spiritual advancement; for God, the Omniscient, was full of love and mercy. He could not see one of His little ones lost, especially those who were making earnest efforts to reach Him! God Himself, full of Love and Pity for His creation, was striving every moment to bring the children of His design out of their darkness into the light, to bring them to the happiness He had designed them to enjoy. Even yet He would that His erring children would return to Him in time. Even yet would He save His frail creation rather than take revenge upon them. The grief of the Creator over one erring human soul was as vast as He Himself was vast and from Him flowed all forgiveness! Why despair then, she said, when God Himself was drawing them towards Himself? The troubles and apparent failures that seemed to hamper them on the path were really not so, for they were mere trials which made them worthy of His Grace! Their

past blunders and discomfitures should but serve them as experiments which warned them against future hypocrisies." These words, full of hope as they were, had the effect of a balm on their heart sores. But their past recollections would again at times plunge them into suspense and they would begin to doubt Mai Malan's motives as well. The latter, however, was so sure of her ground that in her perfect self-confidence she saw no reason to despair. She stayed with them and ministered to their various daily requirements. It was only during hours of leisure that she talked to them on various subjects which inspired fresh hopes in their minds.

Mai Malan used not to sleep much at midnight. About or a little after the darkest hour of the night, she used to get up and sit up in deep contemplation in her bed till dawn, when she would again lie down and sleep till day-break. So no one knew of her nightly vigils. She used invariably to have a nap during the day.

One night, Suhago's restless mind disturbed her sleep at midnight. She opened her eyes and beautiful twinkling stars on the

high met her gaze. But she was not in a mood to appreciate their pure loveliness. To her they appeared to be winking and mocking at her pitiable condition. The perfidies of her relations and hypocrisies of the so-called holy orders that she and her husband had hitherto experienced made a fresh onslaught on her mind and she saw the hopelessness of her task, notwithstanding the encouraging remarks Mai Malan used to make to them. Full of sorrow, she anxiously brooded over the vain mockeries of religion that she had seen surrounding her. Utter despair and depression came upon her again, for the way to find the Truth she could not find, and she could no longer restrain her emotions and began crying—

Die, die, my life, and get done with me !
Do end with my hopes of living any longer !
It is this existence which giveth all pain ;
May I not be, no pain shall then be !
The world is full of cheats—
Sinners all and no honest folk !
May I die, my mother !
Living I am, hence all suffering ;
Had thou like others smothered me in my infancy,
Why should I have wandered about till this day ?

No way except in death !
No care except in death !
No friend and no holy companion !
No relation, no well-wisher and no sympathiser !
Companions are all cheats ;
Why mourn for one, all are lost !
To eat in the day and sleep at night,
Hath become daily routine,
Eating, drinking, laughing, sleeping,
Weeping, crying, sitting, walking,
In the end, mixing with dust,
And to be seen no more.
(If this be the end) why not end it to-day !
And mix myself with dust and be dust ?
If I have to pine away to death by slow torture,
Why should I not get relief by immediate ending?
What hath to happen after sometime,
One may bring about at once !
Let him live who hath happiness !
With whom world is at peace.
He whom life seemeth heavy,
He who enjoyeth not pleasures of Life,
For him Death is welcome ;
So, O mind, hesitate not to die !

While she was thus crying, her voice got choked and her husband was startled. He also got up, and both continued weeping for a long while. Mai Malan heard all this, for as soon as Suhago had commenced crying, un-

conscious of Mai Malan's vigils, she had lied down as in sleep. After some time, Mahnga and his wife, out of utter exhaustion, lay down to sleep and were soon overcome with it. Mai Malan again got up and continued her contemplations, when just before dawn, Mahnga opened his eyes and noticed her sitting up.

On the other hand, Mai Malan became very anxious on their account, and began seriously to think how to save them ; for their condition was now approaching a stage of which Farid has spoken as follows :—

Body hath dwindled down to a skeleton,
And crows bite the soles !
Still God hath not come up,
Look to the fate of the Man !

III

Forehead aches, body burns, there is pain in heart ;

Such a disease is engendered that hath no cure.

Mahnga and Suhago now found themselves deeply in suspense. For several nights successively had they noticed Mai Malan sitting up in contemplations during the midnight hours. How was it, they wondered, that she, who went to bed at the same time as they did and rose in the morning with them, sat up in silence from midnight till dawn ? What for ? And then—she did not allow it, so far as she could, to become known. On the other hand, she endeavoured to conceal the fact. Secondly, they had by this time also noticed that, after taking her morning bath, she always sat alone for a while and recited something. What that recitation was they knew not. Thirdly, it now occurred to them for the first time that after serving them at breakfast, she always left them at about noon and returned in the even-

ing when she prepared their dinner, but that she never partook of it herself. Fourthly, they wondered how it was that whereas she never took her meals at their house she always served them diligently and talked to them affectionately. She had continuously sympathised with them and had never murmured even if they were at any time rude to her.

Now the couple found themselves resolved to sift these matters carefully though cautiously. To them the conduct of Mai Malan appeared quite different from what they had hitherto been experiencing. Before this, they had seen people who advertised themselves like public women, and here they found a respectable lady who endeavoured to conceal all her virtues. She was not a saint or a Sadhu, and yet seemed to have all the virtues needed in the holy orders. She always conducted herself like a sister who shared their pains and troubles—one who did not consider herself as superior to or above the common herd of the human specie but always placed herself on an equal level with them and dealt with them as her equals and superiors, sympathised with them and served them. She had in her something beyond this

as well, which she never exhibited. Humility appeared quite natural in her, and patient endurance marked her entire conduct. She appeared unmindful equally of the world's praises and the world's rebukes, and yet she always mixed with the people of the world, pitied them and helped them as far as she could, and never avoided them in contempt or hatred, however degraded they may have been.

The more Mahnga and Suhago reflected on these matters, their minds found further employment, and they began to follow up in her tracks. As their minds became thus occupied, they were partially relieved of the overpowering depression which had hitherto gripped them as with a cold hand. The dreary emptiness of the world's solitude which had seemed to crush their spirits utterly and the sense of wretchedness of human life which had laid its cruel hand on them vanished. They always noticed, though secretly, her nightly vigils, and Suhago commenced following in her track during the day.

One day, on leaving Mahnga's house after breakfast, Mai Malan went into Sureen-anwali Gulli, where she knocked at the door

of a small house, and a little boy opened the door and admitted her. Suhago passed into the house of one of her early-day friends, which was opposite to this house. After usual greetings, Subago enquired from her friend about the people living in the house opposite. She was told that the house was occupied by the innocent wife of a gambler, who had lost all his property at a gambling den and had completely ignored her, except when he came home to take away the savings of the wages she earned by her own labours. She had two children, to whom a third had been added about ten days before. She was entirely destitute, had nothing to live upon and no clothes for a proper covering, not to speak of the means for a safe passage through her confinement. Her relatives did not approach her on account of her poverty, and the neighbours did not care to assist, lest the gambler might not put a different construction on it. But she appeared somewhat lucky. A woman had recently arrived from Kasur ; she had supplied her with all the necessaries, came to her daily, nursed her and otherwise looked after her comfort in

every way. Suhago was also told that the Kasur woman had a couple of friends, who also visited the gambler's wife occasionally and comforted her, and she was informed on enquiry that Mai Malan bore no relationship to the family and visited the patient merely as an act of benevolence.

This act of benevolence on the part of Mai Malan surprised Mahnga and his wife. To them it was incomprehensible that an unostentatious, quiet and humble woman, like Mai Malan, was capable of such selfless deeds of charity. How was it that a woman who by no means appeared to be rich and did not raise her head above the common level of human beings found means as well as a will to perform such noble deeds? With each successive enhancement in their surprise, their minds found fresh sources of occupation, and they determined to follow Mai Malan still further in order to know more of her life and doings.

On another occasion, Suhago followed Mai Malan to the house of Diwan Paira Mal Sahni in Mohalla Chirimaran. Suhago had no means of approach to this aristocratic home, nor had she any acquaintance in

the street where she could make enquiries. She was sorely perplexed and was standing at the first turning of the street beyond this house, when she saw a water-woman coming out of the mansion. Suhago immediately recognized her as one who also used to carry water to her parents' house and without any further hesitation she approached her to make the enquiries. From her, she learnt that Mai Malan was a friend of the Diwan's wife by whom she was highly respected ; that she used to occasionally come over from Kasur when nearly a dozen other aristocratic ladies also assembled together at the Diwan's house to listen to her learned discourses ; that she sang hymns which melted even hearts of stone, that she always refused to accept any favours from the Diwan's lady, but made her and other aristocratic ladies spend some of their money in helping the poor and distressed, that she was very kind and merciful to the servants and menials; and that she was absolutely free from any vanity on account of her virtues, and was also not afraid of any one. Suhago requested this waterwoman to oblige her by sometime showing her into one of

their assemblages, to which the waterwoman gave an affirmative reply, adding by way of caution, that she would have to assume the garb of a waterwoman and accompany her into the house, not that day but some other time, and that she should not be nervous.

On a third occasion, Suhago tracked Mai Malan to the Mohalla Gujran, where the latter entered the house of a Muhammadan Gujri.* The Gujri had lost her husband some time before this, and her milch cattle had perished in an epidemic. This had left her destitute of all means of subsistence, when Mai Malan had supplied a good milch cow to her and had also arranged for her supplying milk into a couple of well-to-do-families where she could get better prices than in the bazar. Mai Malan's philanthropic deed, in affording means of earning a livelihood to the Gujri, and her general benevolent and pure life, had made such an impression on the latter that she commenced joining Mai Malan in singing the hymns and otherwise in generally following her course of conduct. It had so hap-

*Gujar is a tribe whose chief occupation is that of maintaining milch cattle. A Gujar woman is called Gujri.

pened that Mai Malan's entrance into the Gujri's house on this particular day was noticed by her neighbours, who, already aware of the Gujri's change of religious ideas, discussed between themselves from their house doors the plan of expelling the "Kafir Gujri" from their *mohalla*, but they hesitated to take the step on account of her introduction into the Diwan's family, who were likely to support her. This open discussion gave Suhago an insight into the above facts and she returned home in utter amazement. To her and her husband, it was inexplicable how a Muhammadan could be brought back into the fold of Hinduism and yet they dared not doubt that Mai Malan was a Hindu !

The next day, Mai Malan passed into the forest on the riverside beyond the fort, and was accompanied on this occasion by another lady and a servant. A naked *faqir* with an ulcerated body was lying there on an open space, and they at once proceeded to apply ointment on his ulcers and dress the wounds. Mai Malan also gave him a nourishing diet, and finally proposed to carry him to the town where he could be better

looked after. This proposal apparently enraged the *faqir*, who, in his wrath, cried out, "Ha! wretched demoness! Thou violateth my *dharm* (vow)! I will not go to the city and will die here!" Mai Malan continued unmoved under this undeserved reprimand, assented to his resolution of remaining where he was, and then started back. On her way back, she explained to her companion that a diseased person generally developed a peevish temperament and really meant nothing wrong, that she should feel no indignation at the *faqir's* conduct, and should continue ministering to his requirements. "To be good to the good," she said, "was not difficult, but to be good to the evil doer is what *satsang** teacheth!"

How was it, now wondered Suhago and her husband, that Mai Malan could possess so much energy as to continue her labours in every direction from daylight to day-break, and yet be not exhausted! She mixed with miserable people and yet appeared happy! True, she relieved the pains of those in distress, but why! She commanded respect even from the ladies of high aristocratic

* Company of holymen.

families, but her conduct was not influenced at all and she practised great humility. Both meditated on it for long, but could find no solution to the mystery surrounding this benevolent lady. They had hitherto seen only high barren stiff-necked mountains, in their search after spiritual advancement, and could not now comprehend the lovely beauty of these lowly green mounds of the valley! They were hitherto taught only to look up, marvel and admire, even where they eventually had found no merit; and now they were confronted with a real practical life, without pretensions and without ostentation, full of merit, and yet were not asked to follow. They had ceased to believe in the existence of human virtue which was not based on selfish motives, and now they saw a human existence living in practice a selfless, virtuous and benevolent life! To them it was a marvel!

In due course of time, came on another meeting of *satsang* at the mansion of Diwan Paira Mal Sahni, and of this the water-woman gave previous intimation to Suhago. At the appointed hour Suhago disguised herself and reached the Diwan's mansion,

and was introduced there as a cousin of the waterwoman. In a big room, richly carpeted, a number of *satsangi* ladies were seated, with Mai Malan occupying the front seat, and were apparently waiting for somebody else. A few minutes later another lady arrived, whereupon all servants, and with them Suhago had to leave the room. Suhago entered another room with the waterwoman and was nervously waiting for further developments. Suddenly a music, full of haunting sweetness and rhythmic melody, came floating from the mysterious *satsang* room, and fascinated Suhago's mind. Suhago closed her eyes and composed herself to listen. It appeared to her as if the enchanting sounds were being played and sung for her alone. In a delicious languor she drowsed as it were, losing herself in a labyrinth of happy emotions which came to her unbidden, and quite entranced by the music which was still throbbing in her ears and making her heart beat quick with joy, she felt the warm atmosphere of peace and comfort and slipped away into the land of sleep.

Presently the music died softly away and ceased altogether, and some low-toned

discourse took place in the *satsang* room, which was not properly heard or understood in the other room. Suhago was roused by the waterwoman at the breaking up of the assembly. Suhago hastened into the courtyard just to cast a glance on the ladies. And then—what a light she noticed round their face! It appeared as if their faces, full of radiance, exhaled and produced light that surrounded their entire beings! Her heart started beating with painful quickness, and tears rushed to her eyes. She could not understand the strange feelings that overpowered her. She was still standing in a corner of the courtyard in utter amazement as to what had brought so lovely a colouring to the faces of these ladies, when about a dozen gentlemen of tall commanding figures, singular beauty and dignity of aspect, and marked with peculiar lines of spiritual attraction, wearing white garments, plain turbans and long beards, came gliding into the compound from outside. Their eyes were full of light but were cast down and showed extreme humility of nature. They were received by the ladies with great reverence, were seated in a long row in the

adjoining room, where they were served with best of the dishes prepared by the Diwan's ladies themselves. Entire service was conducted by the ladies themselves, even the removal and cleansing of the plates. When these gentlemen departed after the repast was over, the ladies took their meals and last of all Mai Malan also had her share.

The ladies bowed low to and embraced each other most affectionately, before their departure and the function ended.

Suhago described the entire proceedings to her husband when she went home. Now they felt that they could restrain themselves no longer. Their hearts leaped within them and they just considered that it was no longer justice to Mai Malan that she should be kept in ignorance of the fact that her footsteps had been dogged by Suhago every day since some time. They also felt too much bewildered with what they had come to know, and their souls now required satisfaction. But—still they hesitated. It was in fact yet their curiosity that was to be satisfied! However keen it may have been, it supplied them not with sufficient nerve to talk the

matter over with Mai Malan. How truly is it said—

Seeketh thou “wifehood” ?* But thy body
is defective !

Those that are “wives” glance not towards
another !

* In Sikh spiritual literature, human soul, in search of the Supreme Intelligence, is compared to a ‘wife,’ who maketh elaborate preparations to receive her husband, coming home after a long absence.

IV

For millions of births have I wandered about,
my darling,

During countless lives have I suffered pain ;
The True Lord had I forgotten, my darling,
Heavy punishment have I received !

The husband and wife now began both to love and fear Mai Malan. She, on the other side, also noticed a change in their behaviour, and was satisfied with the results of her work. But the truth is that the gentle nature of Mai Malan and her real philanthropic life were exercising their fullest influence on them.

One morning, at early dawn, Mai Malan, in an extreme ecstasy, sang a hymn, ending with the name of Nanak in the last line. Mahnga, who happened to be then awake, heard this, and, in his utter bewilderment, told his wife next morning that Mai Malan appeared to him a disciple of the "Guru of Jats," for she had that night sung a hymn, composed by "Nanak, the Guru of Jats," in whose succession, one 'Amru *Khatiri*' was then

said to be maintaining his theories. He had turned his disciples from the path of pilgrimages and performance of *shradhs*,* and had obliterated all distinctions of caste. He had also made men of all castes to eat out of the same *langar*,† and refused to see any one who had not thus spoilt his caste. Two Pandits of Lahore, he said, had gone to him for a *shastrarth*,‡ but one of them returned home, as he was not admitted without eating at the *langar*, and the other, Mangu Mal, who complied with the condition, had a discussion and lost it. It was said that he had so lost his senses that he never returned home after that and was still working as a water-carrier at his *langar*. Mangu Mal was a learned Pandit of the Vedas and Shastras, but the report was, he said, that the “Guru” had such a magic or ‘word,’ which, when uttered, made his opponent submit at once.

This news struck Suhago with amazement, and in her extreme anguish of mind she cried out “Ho ! May it not be the same perfidy again !” After a little meditation in

*Annual feeding of Brahmans for the good of the departed souls.

†Kitchen.

‡A debate on spiritual theories.

her mind, she said to her husband, "My lord! Is it not a mere imagination of thine? Whatever I have hitherto seen of Mai Malan excites admiration and feelings of reverence towards her! Pray, let us hesitate to doubt her"! Her husband assented and they kept quiet.

Now it so happened that Mahnga got fever the same day, and the next day Suhago was also laid down in bed with it. It lasted continuously at a high temperature for nineteen days, except in the mornings and at sunset, when it generally fell down a little. It was now the month of September, which appeared unusually hot and close. But Mai Malan, trying as her duties now were, deserted them not. She passed nights in vigils and days in hunger, but kept to their bedside and nursed them properly. Able physicians were also engaged, but Mahnga had not to pay a single copper as their professional fees or price of medicines. On the twenty-first day, temperature became normal, but with it their strength broke down and extreme weakness set in. However, gradually they began picking up strength and in about a fortnight convalescence was over.

Now Mai Malan prepared to take her departure. The hearts of Mahnga and Suhago were now overflowing with more than ordinary gratitude to her, but they had not yet comprehended the object with which Mai Malan had served them. It was for them no longer a mere impertinent curiosity which needed satisfaction. By this time they had seen the beauties of her nature, the everlasting happiness in which she had her existence and ever-benevolent course of action she followed. Fame-hunter she was not, for she endeavoured to conceal her virtues instead of letting them be generally known.

Obviously she had no purpose of her own to serve, in following upon the line of conduct she had chosen for herself. The only possible explanation lay in her superior spiritual development. and if this was so, here was the exact opportunity they had been so long striving for.

These reflections led the 'seekers' to approach Mai Malan, on the eve of her intended departure, with folded hands, and while they both knelt down before her, Mahnga said, "Sister dear, thou art no doubt leaving us now. Pray, do explain

to us what has been puzzling our filthy minds for some time. Perhaps it looks contumacious on our part to have even thought of asking thee any questions regarding thy motives, but, unfortunate as we are, we appear to be fated to remain drowned in the ocean of doubt and get driven about by the waves of uncertainties. We dare not doubt thy sincerity of purpose. Thou hast done great good to us. In sheer gratitude we would rather hold our tongue. But, helpless as we are, we know not where to go to remove our doubts. We are by habit obstinate and it lieth not in our power to change our temper!"

Mai Malan smiled. "Ah, people of God!" she said, "hesitate not to ask what ye wish! Ready am I to explain. It is not difficult to alter the temperaments. It is only a matter of a labyrinthian puzzle; once ye are out of the labyrinth, and ye shall find yourselves on an open plain!"

Mahnga said pleadingly, "Sister dear, thy relationship with us is very distant. Our near kins have not cared for us. With what object hast thou been so good to us? So far as we can see, we can find no object

of thine, needing its fulfilment from us. Selflessly and without any motive hast thou spent thy energies on us, served us and suffered troubles for us. Be gracious and explain to us the reason of all this."

"It is not difficult to explain it," Mai Malan replied gently. "Listen," she said, "and I will explain. First of all, your relationship with me is of the nearest. We are children of One Father, therefore our relationship is that of brotherhood and sisterhood of the full blood. Secondly, I have had a selfish motive in serving ye. It is only the sages and saints who work in absolute selflessness. How can an humble and low creature like myself pretend to be selfless? My motive has been to please my Father, who is gratified when His children are served and made happy. Now have ye been satisfied?"

A curious look came over Suhago's face.

"Satisfied?" she said. "No, thou hast rather set before us another puzzle. Who is the Father whose children we are?"

"One is the Father, of One we are the children! Thou, O Father, art my Teacher!" sang Mai Malan. "That Father is One and

is called the Father of the Universe," she added, "all living creatures are His children, and we are thus brothers and sisters to each other."

Suhago looked at her wistfully. "Thou meanest God!" she queried. "Of God, we all undoubtedly are. We have heard this before as well. But why doth not the world know it? How hast thou alone comprehended it and determined to practise it?"

This question startled Mai Malan, and her eyes got suffused with tears.

"Yes, there is a reason of this as well," she said, wiping her tears. "I have had the good luck of sitting at the feet of one in whom Light of God shineth! He saith, nay, showeth by his actions, that all living beings are related to each other as children of one Father. He teacheth, by His own example, that our Master, God our Father, is one: that He is the Creator, the Life-giver and the Sustainer of the Universe, and it is to Him alone that our devotion and worship are due. None else exists equal to Him or comparable with Him. He preacheth that we should

all remember our Lord-creator and not get entangled in His creation! Enjoy the things created by Him, but forget Him not for a moment, while so enjoying. Be grateful to Him and keep Him constantly in our hearts. This he not only preacheth, but He is Himself an open model of the practical working of these high principles. He proclaimeth, as an exemplar, that this life is transient and ought to be taken advantage of in using it to serve our brethren."

"Canst thou not tell us who He is?" Suhago rejoined imploringly.

"Nay, not yet," replied Mai Malan.

"Why not?" beseeched Suhago.

"I should frighten you if I were to tell you His name at once. Your hearts are not yet ready to bear the Light of Knowledge. Ye have spent most of your lives in the darkness of ceremonials and superstitions. The Sun of Truth shall dazzle your eyes!"

"True, we are just as thou sayest!" confessed Mahnga. "But now our hearts yearn to come out of the darkness!"

"Very well," said Mai Malan, "if that is so, then learn first all what I explained to

you before, that we are mutually related to each other as children of one Father ! If this be correct, then the pride of caste and family vanity are utterly foolish. Ye have been so bound up in the trammels of caste that ye have not been able to shake them off, even after twelve years of wandering after *sadhus* and *dervishes*. Your prejudices have not permitted you to respect real merit. Listen to the words of Truth, I repeat—

In the womb, there was neither race nor caste,

From God's loins, have all been created.

Say, O Pandit, since when didst thou become Brahman ?

Mayst thou not waste thy life in Brahmanic vanity !

If thou art a Brahman, because of birth from a Brahman mother,

Why didst thou not take birth differently ?

How art thou a Brahman, and I a Sudra ?

Have I blood in my veins, and thou milk ?

“ Now tell me what value there is in caste and lineage ? ‘ What availeth caste ? Ascertain the Truth ! ’ There is no merit in caste.

Truth will be the deciding element. For there is no caste hereafter !

Value the light within, don't ask of caste,
For there is no caste hereafter !

He of whom I have been speaking to you hath himself said—

Let no one be proud of his caste !
He who knoweth Brahm is Brahman !
Do not be vain of caste, O fool !
Many evils shall follow upon this vanity !
People of all four castes, men speak of,
Are all created from the seed of Brahm.
Of one clay, the whole universe
Hath been modelled by the Great Potter.
Of five elements is body constituted,
Who can think of more or less !

Now tell me where is the caste, the shackles of which, like a huge serpent, are coiled round your necks ? Hence is it that ye are not yet fit to look with your naked eyes at the Sun of Truth."

Mahnga looked up and his eyes were filled with water. He could offer no contradiction to this, for he felt it to be true.

"Mother, whose sayings are these that thou hast repeated," he enquired. "They pierce directly through the heart, and forcibly attract the mind to truth.

“Ye are not yet fit to hear the name,” she replied; “nothing to do with the name too. Follow the Truth and discard falsehood! Be of a pure discriminating mind, like a swan* and your object shall be attained!”

Mahnga's caste prejudices had now received a severe shock and he said :

“Mother, there is great force of Truth in thy words. In reality caste is merely a chimera, but our ancestors must have proposed these barriers for the purposes of practical worldly life!”

“Ye are now discussing spiritual matters with me. But mind, by renouncing pride of caste, the practical worldly life is also better managed. Mutual jealousies and enmities are avoided, wars are stopped and cruelty and hardships vanish. ‘When from one Light hath the whole world sprung, then who low and who high?’ Where is caste? Have you ever seen anybody possessing certain qualifications merely on account of his caste? Qualifications are acquired and these acquisitions determine the nomenclature, which is by stupidity degenerated into caste prejudices.”

*Swan is said to have the faculty of separating milk from water.

On this point, Suhago interposed and said, " True, we have hitherto been in a sad delusion.

" The reason of this delusion is that ye have not comprehended the root principle of common brotherhood.

" Our Creator is One, and, being His children, we are all related in common brotherhood. When we are children of one Father, the vanities of caste and lineage, considering one high and the other low, appear a great blunder. So, dear ones, ye have not understood the root principle. Ye have lost sight of Oneness and have adopted Plurality. Had ye kept your mental eye fixed on Unity, no subsequent errors would have arisen. A single mistaken step maketh differences of hundreds of miles. Let us see. By not keeping to the principle of Oneness, ye got into the manacles of caste prejudices; on account of pride of caste ye avoided learning virtue from others, bound up as ye were within your own narrow circle; this isolation led ye into Egotism, from which flowed vices of all sorts. This led ye into doubts and ye continued wavering. Again, by not keeping your ideas

fixed on the root principle of Unity, ye comprehended not God being the sole Creator, and thus engaged yourselves in the worship of His creation. The creation being all of a perishable nature, instead of getting fixity of mind by its worship, ye began wavering at each change in the outer world and fell in doubt and superstition. When your minds are still plunged deep in doubt, would it not frighten ye if I were to place you directly in front of the source of the Light of Truth, whose very essence is Unity?"

Mahuga uttered a deep sigh and said, "Mother mine, thy words hit the heart. We both have blundered a great deal in our spiritual search, and sorely disappointed, we were now counting the days of death, when thou hast pulled us out by the hand, as it were, from the deep ditch of depression. Shouldst thou now show us the Light we might be saved. Or else we durst not face our fate of reverting to the same sea of doubt thou hast been so good to pull us out of. We have made our own independent efforts and have proved to be crippled and maimed. Now do thou with us whatever thou likest! Give us any hardships to endure

and we will endure them, but do not turn us away from thee without teaching us something of the peace of mind thou possessest, and showing us the source of Light whence thou hast lit thy torch !”

“ Is that your desire ? ” she queried.

“ Yes, that is our desire,” and Mahnga bent his head.

“ I shall serve ye, then,” she said. “ Yes, order me as ye will, for let this mind and body of mine be put to some use. Grateful I shall be to ye, if ye shall not allow my worthless body to decay without first being of some use to ye !”

“ We know not, mother, how !” and Mahnga knelt down at her feet. “ As thou hast by spending nearly a month here, granted to us our present span of life, so be thou good enough to grant us our souls as well !”

Malan was startled at these words, and with eyes wet and expression full of compassion, she said, “ May God forgive ! ‘ Granting souls !’ Thank Heaven, the Giver of souls hath also been sent unto us ! But—

Tread I not on the path shown,

And I say ‘ I have reached destination !’

Am not on speaking terms with my husband,
How then can I dwell at home !”

V

O Mother ! At His feet have I taken shelter ;
At His Sight, my mind hath been enraptured,
Evil mind hath vanished !

Next morning Mai Malan was seen in quiet contemplation, with eyes closed but shedding a regular stream of tears !

She, who had never been seen in anxiety, who had never been afflicted with distress, whom no troubles had perplexed, was this day sitting motionless and was pouring down rains of tears !

Mahnga and Suhago noticed this but were sheer helpless.

Eventually, the tears stopped and Mai Malan's expression also gradually cooled down and became peaceful. She opened her eyes. And then—both Mahnga and Suhago rushed towards her and knelt down at her feet.

“ O Mother,” they said, “ We cannot comprehend thy doings. Pray open thou thyself the locks of thy inscrutable life and explain something to us ! ”

Malan said : “ Question me and I will answer.”

“ Why hast thou wept to-day ? ” enquired Suhago.

The eyes of Malan sparkled and she said :
 “ The foremost devotee of my Soul-giver hath explained the reason in the following terms:—

I am in Love with my Sweetheart ;

How to meet my dearest Patron ?

I am in search of my Beloved,

Who is the embodiment of Truth !

Satguru is my Darling.

For whose Union I shall sacrifice myself !

Because my Darling sheweth unto me

My Lord-God, the Creator ! ”

Then she became quiet.

After waiting for a few seconds, Mahnga again said, “ Pray explain further, Mother, for I do not comprehend it. I am dull and pray that thou mayst show the way to the blind ? ”

“ What should I tell ye, friends ? ” replied Malan. “ The Love of the Creator produceth bliss. Longing for His Vision bringeth forth tears. The hope of His Vision exciteth eagerness, and produceth felicity of mind ! His Union accomplisheth absorption, and a remembrance of the effect of His Union causeth cheerfulness ! Realisation of the

Supreme Divinity bringeth an everlasting peace of mind, careless of pains and pleasures of the world, and mind groweth firm yet unswayed in benevolence."

These expressions were quite incomprehensible to Mahnga and his wife, and the latter repeated the same remark that, easy as the words used were, they contained a meaning too high for them to comprehend; when Mai Malan raised a sharp cry and said, "I must go to-day!" A stream of water rushed out from the fountains of her eyes, and she began singing—

Come, dearest Sweetheart!

Without Thee I am really miserable!

Sleep visiteth not my eyes, Darling!

Food and drink agree with me not!

Food and drink agree with me not, in grief I
pine away!

How to attain bliss, without my Beloved.

Pray I to the Guru, should the Guru be gra-
cious,

Would I be united which ever way may He unite!

Then she was calm.

Mahnga knelt down at her feet and
prayed:

"Be kind, dear mother, and stay for a
few days more. Thy words pierce through

the heart ! May be, in thy company we may also find consolation ! ”

“ Ah, my friends and elders,” Malan replied, “ I can stay no longer, for my “ movements are no longer under my control.”

“ Where art thou going ? ” queried Mahnga. “ Canst thou not take us with thee ? Separation from thee will make us miserable ! Thy sympathies have proved the mainstay of our beings ! ”

“ I cannot tell where I am going ! ” replied Malan. “ I have, of course, no objection if ye accompany me, but listen what sort of going is where I go —

First accept death and renounce desire of living !

Be the humblest of all, *then* come unto me !

For it is laid down as follows :

Wantest thou to play in Love ?

Head in hand, come into my street !

Sacrifice thy head, waver not,

Then alone step forth on to this path ! ”

She ceased, and they looked up.

“ If these are the only conditions, mother,” they said, “ then ready we are to step forth on to this path ! We accept death with pleasure, for death is no longer painful

to us ! We have many a time invited it, but it won't come ! We are now resolved to go with thee, only if thou wouldst but permit us ! ”

“ So be it,” Malan replied ; “ Prepare yourselves to depart hence.”

In a couple of hours' time, a bullock conveyance was hired and the entire party started in it from Lahore. The conveyance dragged its long and weary course along an unmetalled track, which in those days served the purposes of a road. They had to spend four nights in the journey, and reached their destination on the morning of the fifth day.

It should be mentioned here that at every roadside village on their journey, Mai Malan was received cordially by a number of ladies and gentlemen who were all remarkable for their gentle appearances, simple clothing, agreeable manners, humility of conduct and sweet tone of speech. Their expressions looked happy and peaceful.

At each halting station, a congregation was held in the evening, where Mai Malan discoursed with the ladies who came out to

meet her ; but Mahnga and Suhago were never admitted to these gatherings. These two wondered how different this world, wherein Mai Malan moved, was from that in which they had spent so much of their lives. Everybody they met in the way, men, women and children, were remarkable for their quiet, loving and intelligent behaviour and seemed to live in a *satya yuga*. Mahnga was at a loss to understand in which mint their natures had been coined and in which school they had all learnt their manners. He meditated upon it for a pretty long time but could find no satisfactory explanation.

On the morning of the fifth day, the party reached Goindwal which was a small brick-built town of apparently a recent origin, situate on a high level, not far from the banks of a river. The white sheet of water, stretching lengthwise a short distance down below presented rather a charming scenery. The pilgrims, for so may we call this small party, halted in front of a beautiful structure, close to a large and deep well of *pucca* masonry. This well was provided with eighty-four steps of sufficient width to let thirty men walk down abreast to the water-level. Here

the party bathed, and then received some food from the *langar* which they ate to refresh themselves. They then arranged separate salvers of presents with which they were now to proceed to the sacred presence.

Before proceeding onwards, however, Mai Malan addressed Mahnga and Suhago in a most affectionate tone, saying "my friends, I am now taking ye into the presence of that radiant Light, in whose search ye have hitherto unwittingly spent so much of your precious time. Ye have so far come across mere glow-worms and have felt disappointed, but now ye are going to look upon the Sun which hath shed its brilliant lustre in the world ! Yea, here is the source from which a ray of the mighty Light of God hath come out to be diffused on this earth. Prepare yourselves, for the Light of Truth shineth and may ye not get dazzled !"

So saying, she stood up, and with folded hands, uttered an humble prayer to God. Mai Malan, with eyes sparkling with water and heart full of humility, led the way and the two novices followed. They passed through a splendid hall into an open inner

courtyard, where a big congregation was assembled.

All eyes were directed towards the centre of the assembly, where on a *divan*, made of sandal wood, lying on a beautiful and rich *masnad*, sat a man of singular beauty and dignity of aspect. He was of middle size, had snow-white hair and was neither fat nor emaciated. He wore a black silk *sehli* in his hair on the head, and displayed a fine intellectual head. His eyes were full of light, and an *aura* of pure radiance surrounded his entire form. His expression was so lovely and attractive, that no sooner Mahnga and Suhago looked upon him, than they could restrain themselves no longer. They rushed towards the centre, and threw themselves down at the feet of this holy man. They even forgot to present their salvers, which had now to be taken charge of by Mai Malan. It appeared as if in this high and holy personage, they had recognized a loving father, from whom they had long been separated. He appeared to them no stranger. Their souls rushed out to consummate a union, which had been deferred for so long, and they washed the

holy feet with the overflow of tears from their eyes. It appeared to them that all their pain and suffering was due to separation from home, where they had at last reached, to find peace and consolation. The Satguru patted them on the head and accorded them an affectionate reception, as if strayed children had at last come home.

“Met after so long !” He said. “Wandered far and away ! Suffered great pain ? Blessed is the Lord ! He will now bring ye up in His own lap !

The object is within, seek it not outside !

By Guru’s grace is it found, (when) the veil is taken off ! ”

During this interval, Mai Malan was standing apart. Her eyes were shedding tears ! She was waiting earnestly as to when she could have the opportunity to touch the sacred feet, but, anxious as she was, she felt their want far greater than her own and controlled her emotions. Jealousy ? No, it had no place in her mind. Seeing them in touch with the holy feet of the Satguru, she wished she could throw herself on their feet, for, to her, blessed were they who had the privilege of holding the Lord’s feet.

The Satguru raised their heads from the ground and seated them close to his *divan*, whereupon Mai Malan bowed down and squatted in front of the Satguru.

The Satguru smiled and said, "Mai Malan, the benevolent ! But, Mai, ever remain on guard against the strategy of egotism ! Keep firm thy Love of God, and remain unflinching in thy Faith in Him ! Be ever kind to all living beings, but never get entangled in the attachment of any ! Till now, God hath supported thee ! He will help thee in future as well !"

Then the Satguru turned towards Mahnga and said, "Bhai Mahnga ! Thy own name is Mahnga* and God thou considered cheap ? Cheap when thou couldst not get, thou became petulant ? But perceive the Graciousness of the Lord on humanity ! Look up ! And unite the thread of thy mind, in high praise and reverence, with the Almighty Lord, the God of Truth !

"United !"

Bhai Mahnga was a different man ! His mind was entirely transformed ! He had a new spiritual birth ! Yes,

*Literally meaning dear and costly.

“by birth in Satguru, all wandering is stopped!” His mind was already prepared for the transformation, and now devotion sprouted out as it were in high fountains from the very pores of his body!

The Guru then faced Suhago and said, “Mai Suhagbai! Two boons! God as well as matter! Wantest a son as well as God? The treasure-house of Guru Nanak is inexhaustible! Accounts are not checked! Eat, spend and be thankful. Thou shalt also have a son. But do not absorb thyself in him as thine. Thou shalt consider him as a guest sent thee by God, and God will also abide with thee! Take heart, and see what is in front of thy eyes!”

At this moment, Suhagbai's eyes were cast down towards the earth and were shedding tears, when a sudden flash passed across her eyes and she saw her tear-drops change into pearls and then each pearl turn into a sun. She felt a whirl—a vision of a Mighty Light struck her; she heard marvellous strains of music; and then—she came to herself! The vision was over, but she was no longer the same Suhago! Springs of Remembrance started from every hair-root on her

body ; she felt self-fragrant ; her body seemed light ! She felt, as saith Kabir, “ my **budhi* was vanquished, my* *budhi* was chanded, and I found the† *sidhi* ! ”

Mahnga and Suhago became “ Bhai Mahnga ” and “ Mai Suhagbai ! ” All their doubts, superstitions and perplexities vanished ; and the desired object was obtained !

Truly is it said :—

By touching the feet of Guru Amardas, sins
of the earth perished !

By touching the feet of Guru Amardas, Angels
and saints bless !

By touching the feet of Guru Amardas, absorp-
tion is attained and emancipation won !

By touching the feet of Guru Amardas,
fearlessness is gained, fear ended !

By following the word of him (Guru Amardas),
who is firm in One, without Duality,

Saith Jalap, all blessings, by seeing Guru
Amardas, shalt thou have !

* Faculty of thinking.

† First stage in spiritual advancement.

VI.

O friends, Sikhs of the Guru! follow the
Guru's example ;

Whatever the Guru saith, accept as good.

(For) marvellous is the story of the Lord !

After a few days, Mai Malan returned to
Kasur, by the order of Satguru.

Guru Amardas had established 22 *Manjis*, 72 *Panghooras* and 52 *Peerhis*. That is to say, he had sent out so many tried Sikhs, who had qualified "themselves in realising the Name of God and making others realise it," as apostles, to spread the Message and perform deeds of benevolence, throughout the country. Of these apostles, people on *Manjis* and *Panghooras* were males, while *Peerhis* were occupied by women. In other words, 52 ladies were entrusted with the mission of preaching amongst women in different places of the country, and work for the general behoof of the congregations and spread of the Message. One of these lady apostles was Mai Malan.

Now Mahnga and Suhagbai understood the reason of Mai Malan's pure and benevolent life. Understood? Nay, they had now themselves drank deep at the same spring of *Amrit*, the elixir of Life. Now they realised the difference clearly. They had hitherto in their search after truth, seen the misdeeds of hypocrites. And now they saw the Truth in its dazzling and resplendent radiance, and found it in its pristine glory. The test had been applied. Their present acquisition was carefully weighed on their hearts' scales. It was right. They passed some time at Goindwal in the service of the congregation and in following the Path of the Satguru.

Their humility of mind, their selfless service of the congregation and their absorption of mind pleased the Lord, who reared these new plants by watering them with His good wishes.

They were, in the first instance, blessed immediately on their arrival, with the attainment of their main objects of life. "Found not by efforts, found not by service, came unto me of itself!" They now busied themselves in service. Service, selfless and earnest, is always a task, difficult of perform-

ance, and in service the seeker has to face pains and privations. These also came and troubled. But their minds were now firm and the praise of the Almighty Father was ever in their hearts; so they continued performing service in perfect equanimity of mind.

One day, it so happened that a heavy storm of rain suddenly came down when Bhai Mahnga was washing the clothes of the Satguru on the river-side. He was yet gathering the clothes when an infant son of a woman, who was washing her clothes not far from him, was carried away by a strong current of water. The woman shrieked and the cry startled Bhai Mahnga. He looked, and he immediately plunged into the river to save the child. The current was strong but he swam his way to the child and secured him in his grasp, but here he was drove down by the swelling waters of the flood, and in spite of his repeated efforts to swim he was carried off nearly a mile and a half down the river. Here he touched the shore and bringing out the child with him, at once attended to resuscitate him. After the revival of the child, he took him

up and carried him up along the shore to where he had left his mother. All the way he sang praises of the Almighty Father, who had used him as an instrument to save the life of the infant child. When he reached the *ghat* where he had been washing, he found neither the woman nor his own articles there. He waited for a few minutes, looked round to see if she could be discovered anywhere, but could find no clue. Eventually, he returned to the town, and brought the child with him. In the way, he cogitated in his mind as to what course he should adopt with regard to the child and what explanation would he make to the Satguru regarding the loss of his clothes, but he could fix upon no particular line of action. It may, however, be added that it never came into his mind positively to conceal any of the facts from the Satguru or to keep away from him for any length of time. But how to approach the Satguru and how to make up the loss of the clothes he could not decide upon in his mind. His wife met him in front of his house, and he explained the entire incident to her. With folded hands, she beseeched her lord to proceed at once to the Satguru and explain

the whole matter. "Let us be reprimanded, my lord," she said, "but let not the idea of *bemukhta** (disobedience) cross our minds for a single moment." On reaching the Satguru's presence, they found him engaged with some Sikhs who had just then arrived on pilgrimage from abroad. They stopped at a distance and stood there with heads cast down and folded hands. They remained in that position for nearly three hours. The child slumbered in the arms of Mai Suhagbai who, pressed down with the solid weight of the child's body, felt most uncomfortable. Blood congested in their veins and their legs became stiff. But they shifted not from their position. Till, presently, the Lord finished his discourse with the fresh arrivals, and looked towards them. The Satguru smiled, "Clothes turned into a child, Bhai Mahnga?" he said, "The bargain is very cheap."

The Guru then stood erect and continued, "Why do ye suffer pain? Ye are Guru's children and are dearer to him than sons born of himself. Ye are not subjects that ye should be afraid of him. Fear God alone whose fear may purify your minds. Don't mind the clothes. The woman is coming herself."

* Turning one's face and thus showing one's back.

At this moment, the woman, the mother of the child, came in and placed the clothes, properly washed, dried and folded, in front of the Satguru.

According to the explanations that she gave, it now transpired that when she, who by the bye was a Muhammadan, had noticed Bhai Mahnga also being carried away by the current in his attempt to save the child, she had looked into the clothes he was washing, and knew that they belonged to the Satguru and hence that it was a Sikh who had plunged into the river after her child. On this, she had felt satisfaction and was sure that neither any mishap would occur to the Sikh nor would he return without her son. So certain she was about the safety of her child that she had at once gathered the clothes and the other articles belonging to Bhai Mahnga, had taken them home, where she carried water from the well, washed the clothes and dried them in front of fire; and now she brought them to the Satguru, together with Bhai Mahnga's washing requisites in the firm belief that she would while delivering them to the Satguru have her child back.

Dear reader ! Such was public confidence in the spiritual powers, benevolence and integrity of the Sikhs of the Satguru, in those good old days, that this Muhammadan woman considered her drowned son as perfectly safe in the hands of an apparently drowning Sikh ! When the woman gave her explanation, in a perfectly innocent manner, and demanded her son, Bhai Mahnga and his wife took hold of her feet and said : “ O mother, blessed art thou and blessed is thy faith ! We are merely low worthless creatures, for our minds wavered and remained perplexed for several hours.” “ Hail to the glory of the Satguru,” they exclaimed loudly, “ that so much confidence is inspired in alien minds !”

This incident served to safeguard the minds of Bhai Mahnga and Mai Suhagbai against an attack of vanity while performing service at the Guru's house.

One night after meals had been served, the Satguru asked Bhai Mahnga to go and see if some people had not gone to bed without food ! Bhai Mahnga roamed about in the whole town and supplied dinner to all who had not taken it. He then came

and reported to the Satguru that all had taken food. "Is there any surplus food in the *langar*," asked the Guru, to which Bhai Mahnga replied in the affirmative, "feed the animals on it then," ordered the Satguru. This was also done, but food was still in surplus. "Put it in the river for fishes," was the order given. "Let all utensils be emptied before going to bed." Bhai Mahnga placed the surplus food in a big basket and carried it to the river side. In the forest near the river, he met a gang of robbers, who thought he was carrying property of some value. They pounced upon him and struck at him, but he quietly placed the basket before them and said : "Thank God ! I was carrying it to throw into the river for the fishes. Ye are men, may this be of use to ye ! pray do take it," the hungry robbers while they did not spare him from a few kicks and blows, sat down to eat the food thus supplied to them. After their repast was over, they searched the person of Bhai Mahnga, but found nothing of value on him. Eventually, out of pure mischief, they dug a hole in the earth and burried Mahnga kneedeep in it, and tied his hands on his

back. When leaving him in that predicament, they jocularly remarked, "this is the price of food supplied by thee."

In this trial, Mahnga's mind wavered not. He believed that it was certainly for his good that the incident had happened. Nobody could injure him but his own mind, and his mind remained undaunted. He said to his mind, 'O trembling toy of quicksilver? Look how Satguru is kind to thee ! Thou didst never sit quiet for a time and remember thy Creator ! The Satguru hath now done thee this kindness that thou mayst not waste thy time in vain in thy slumber at night. Be active and remember God !

What shalt thou do in sleep, sit up and be
awake ;

From whomsoever's company thou hath
separated,

Remain in communion with Him !

Mahnga took this trial as one ordained for Him by the Satguru Himself, nay, went further and felt deep gratitude to Him who had thus given him an opportunity to remain awake at night and meditate on the Divine Love. It was good that he

was thus burried kneedeep, it was agreeable to him that he was thus placed in utter solitude, for the Satguru had considered it best for him to be thus still and lonely. He turned his consciousness within himself and fixed it there. Not for a single moment did fear or suspicion or doubt enter his mind ! Unflinching Faith had become a part and parcel of his nature, and where there is Faith, Fear there cannot be. The incident had happened at about midnight, and he opened not his eyes and did not bring down his consciousness to the world around him till daybreak.

His wife had waited for him for some-time in her cottage, but when night had much advanced, she imagined that he must have absorbed himself in the Satguru's service, so she also, in her extreme satisfaction of mind, engaged herself in contemplation.

On the other hand, the robbers, who were four in number, named Lalu, Balu, Beli and Mali, passed into another village, where they stole some property of value. They were mere budding youths of Majha, who had recently gone into bad company and had not yet done much by way of thiev-

ing, and not having yet passed through the clutches of law had high ambitions in their criminal course of conduct.

Now, after disposing of the bulk of the stolen property by burying it under ground, they resolved to disguise themselves as Sikhs and get into Goindwal, which was not distant. They had two reasons for coming to this decision. Firstly, they felt themselves badly in need of rest for a few days, and secondly, they knew that at Goindwal they would not be molested by the Police, for the place was never searched or looked into in trace of criminals. They thus came up to Goindwal, and washed at the *baoli*, (the stepped well,) and put on their disguise. They then prepared some *parshad* and entered into the congregation at a little before dawn, when *Asa di var* was being enchanted in the presence of the Satguru. They bowed and placed the *parshad* in the holy presence and quietly occupied an obscure corner in the congregation.

No sooner had they done so than the Satguru raised his right arm and stopped the singers from continuing the *var*. He then sent for the cooks, and asked them where

Bhai Mahnga was. They replied that he had, under the Satguru's order, gone last night to throw the surplus food into the river and had not returned, and that they had thought that much tired as he was after the heavy work, he must have gone home to sleep.

The Satguru remarked, "Ye have not thought rightly;" and then got up. In a sweet and melodious tone, the Satguru recited—

"None shall plead for a thief!"

"How could a thief's action be approved?"

"So hath Satguru Nanak Dev said!"

He then called a Sikh near him, and said.—"This *parshad* that lieth in front of me is of the stolen property. Let no one touch it!" Then he addressed the *sangat* and advised them to leave the carpet whereon lay ill-gotten property, for, he said, "devotees, seeking communion with the Divine could not obtain happiness while sitting on that carpet.

The *sangat* rose up and vacated the carpet.

"This property," he continued, "belongeth to Mehro, a widow of Khadur, the residence of my Satguru. With hard labour

had she earned it. The robbers have stolen her property and out of it have spent a little to bring *parshad* to me. Let a Sikh go and fetch her, so that she may receive her property back."

A Sikh ran off immediately to Khadur, and the remaining *sangat* followed the Satguru to the *baoli*.

Here the Satguru looked up to the sky and he saw the deep red rays of light shooting upwards at the eastern horizon. In soft tone, full of compassion, the Lord uttered the hasty expression of "Blessed is Bhai Mahnga, blessed is Bhai Mahnga," and then hastened towards the river. *Sangat* followed him. At short intervals, the divine voice repeated "Blessed is *Sikhi*, blessed is its Faith and blessed is Bhai Mahnga!"

When the party neared the river side, they heard the soft and resonant sounds of "Wah ! Wah !*" thrilling in silvery clearness and divine purity through the whole atmosphere between the heaven and the earth, as if the trees and plants, the sky and the earth, and the entire nature around had been endowed with a thousand tongues to sing the

* Interjections, signifying gratitude.

sweet and melodious song, in divine æsthetic pleasure, which lifted human soul to its own supernal heights.

The song of 'Wah ! Wah !' is Divine !

With the Divine, may union be effected !

The entire nature appeared electrified with the celestial song of 'Wah ! Wah !' and the entire *sangat** floated, as it were, rather than walked, where Bhai Mahnga was half buried in the ground. The solemn and exquisitely beautiful music of 'Wah ! Wah !' seemed rising from every hair on his body and vibrating through the entire nature around. Delicious sounds trembled through the air and with their penetrating tenderness the *sangat* was pleasantly exhilarated. Eventually a Sikh advanced and prayed to the Satguru for orders, and the divine voice once more spoke and said, "Those who have done the burying will do the unburying !" At this moment, the robbers, whom the magnetic influence of the Satguru's Will had attracted spell-bound, as it were, along the *sangat* to the scene of their mischief, rushed forward and threw themselves headlong on the ground, crying, "O Father of the Universe ! Grave sinners we are ! Do thou

* Congregation or assemblage.

forgive us ! We have committed great sins ! Thou knowest all ! Be merciful to us, O Lord ! ” So saying, they wept bitterly.

The Satguru replied, “ Do ye untie the knots tied by yourselves ! ”

They got up and unburied Bhai Mahnga, who was still absorbed in contemplation. But his legs had become stiff and body cold, and when placed erect out of the hole could not stand. He was tottering down, when the Satguru, out of extreme love and ecstasy, rushed forward and supported him in his close embrace. He said—

“ Dearest Mahnga hath won the Guru at a dear cost ;

Mahnga saveth sinners, great work hath he done.”

Mahnga saw within himself that the image of the Satguru, on whom he had concentrated his inner consciousness, was gradually receding from his view and had eventually gone out of him and embraced him from outside ! He opened his eyes, and—found himself actually in the embrace of the Lord.

In extreme ecstasy and reverence, Mahnga dropped down on the holy feet.

The Satguru passed his hands across his body and he became outwardly conscious and light in body.

“ My son, ” gently spoke the Satguru, “ Thy efforts have borne fruit ! ”

Mahnga looked round, and recognized the four heroes of his previous night's adventure standing tremblingly aside and shedding tears of contrition. He recognized them, though he had hitherto seen them only in the dark, and he went to them with folded hands and thanked them, “ for it was by their kindness that his unworthy self had been the recipient of Grace ! ” This humble expression of gratitude, for what was really a wrong done by them, gave them a still ruder shock, and they prostrated themselves at his feet and cried out, “ Pray, forgive us and plead for our being forgiven ! ”

This pathetic appeal touched Bhai Mahnga's delicate heart, and he advanced towards the Lord, and taking hold of His feet, prayed.

“ It is thy virtue to be the cleanser of the unclean ! Be thou merciful to these who have been so benevolent to thy slave.

The Satguru replied, " Let them untie with their own hands what they have themselves tied down " !

The party then came home and found the robbed widow already arrived. The robbers immediately restored all her property, and then took permission of the Satguru to go home and do the rest of the " untying. " They had received a severe shaking which had served to awaken their spiritual consciousness, and, under a high fever of repentance, they reached home and sold off their cattle and lands to settle with all those whom they had hitherto robbed. Having satisfied every one of the demands, to its full extent, they returned to the Satguru after a fortnight. The Lord then remarked that they " had not suffered the punishment of law," whereupon they went to a Kazi and, confessing all their misdeeds, prayed for punishment. To their good luck, the Kazi was not a cold-blooded misanthrope. When he heard their story, he was utterly amazed, and calling them nearer to himself one by one, he gave each of them a slap on the face. " Go and tell your Guru now that

ye have suffered the law's punishments, inflicted on ye by the Kazi."

These robbers then joined the Sangat, served them and turned out to be good and faithful Sikhs.

However, the incident did not pass away without leaving an influence on the innocent mind of the Kazi. He was attracted by the force of truth, and one night he paid a secret visit to the Satguru. The visit was paid secretly lest his co-religionists should circulate venomous calumnies against him and condemn him as a Kafir.* But when once he came into the holy presence, his mind was thrilled with ecstasy and he obtained spiritual regeneration. He received *pahul*,† absorbed his mind in the contemplation of the Word and became a Sikh. He renounced his home, built a *serai* and spent the rest of his life in spiritual contemplation and service of the needy.

How well is it said—

Listen to the value of holy Companionship,

O friend ;

Dirt washed, a million pains relieved,

and mind became pure !

* A renegade.

† Baptism of sikhism.

VII.

When He favoureth, Satguru is found.

All bliss is in God's Name.

Emancipation is obtained, Guru hath broken
the shackles,

When Nanak's slave sang the praises
of the Lord !

Some time passed after the above incidents. One morning, midst an assembled congregation, the Satguru Amardas, in His supreme pleasure, called Bhai Mahnga and Mai Suhag-bai and gave them a beautiful booklet, containing, in most handsome script, selections from the hymns of Lord Nanak and His successor. They received the invaluable gift with feelings of purest reverence, and tears of gratitude rushed to their eyes, when the Satguru said,—

“Go ye now to Lahore; live there and work your emancipation ! Your incense will make numerous others fragrant. Perform ye in the Lahore *sangat* selfless service (*sewa*) with all your mind, body and wealth !”

Thus ordered, they bowed to the Satguru and departed. They travelled by easy stages and eventually reached home where they were accorded a hearty welcome by the local *sangat*.

Here they regulated their lives in such a manner that not a single minute of their precious lives was wasted. They always rose from sleep nearly a quarter of the night before daybreak, washed themselves and attended the morning congregations. While coming home from the congregation after daybreak, they used to recite sacred hymns, in the way as well as at home, till the every day programme of recitations was finished. After meals, which they always served to the poor before taking themselves, they used to sleep for a while. On waking, they engaged themselves in serving the people and performing benevolent deeds. In short they did all what they had originally seen Mai Malan doing, and which had then puzzled their minds. By the performance of selfless and humble services, they acquired an amount of happiness which they had never experienced before, and they were always swayed with the predominant wish *why all brothers were not similarly happy*.

They had by this time entirely got rid of their old hankering after a multiplicity of gods and had found peace in the realisation of One Almighty Father. Their old vanity of caste and conceit of lineage had given place to feelings of Brotherhood of Man in their innocent and pure hearts. For the Sikhs they entertained a very high amount of love and reverence. They felt their minds, bodies and all belongings as of the Guru and as dedicated to the service of His Sikhs. *Paropkar* (benevolence) was theirs consecrating their lives. Jealousy and malevolence had long vanished. Hatred and contempt of others, inferior to them, entirely disappeared. Previous to their conversion to Sikhism they had disliked every body else, and avoided the world; and now they deemed themselves as humblest of the humble, and while they avoided vice, they always shared their virtues with others; for Lord Nanak has said—

Should we find a sachet of virtues,
Let us take fragrance out of it !
Should we find virtue in friends,
Let us meet them and share the same !
Let us participate in virtue, and leave vice
behind !

Let us wear silk and with great alacrity take
our field !

Wherever we may go, let us talk well, and
drink of the well mixed nectar !

Should we find a sachet of virtues,
Let us take fragrance out of it !

The world also began to treat them better. Hitherto they were considered as fearful maniacs, but now they began to be regarded in a better light. Hitherto, the voices of the world had delighted in uttering scandal against them—voices which never praise so much as they condemn; and *they* had also avoided the world and its environments entirely. But now—they felt compassion for the people of the world; they loved the degraded humanity and avoided it not. They tried to raise them. They attempted to do them good. They adopted a life of beneficence and service towards the people at large, and thus the people could no longer resist regarding them in their true light. Their minds had become firm in the Supreme Creator, and they loved, and were gradually loved by, His Creation !

By a prudent management of their remaining property, they obtained a monthly income of rupees fifty, out of which they

spent only one-fifth on their personal requirements. They simplified their lives to such a degree that ten rupees a month were found quite sufficient for them to live upon. Another fifth of their income they regularly remitted to the Satguru, by way of *Daswandh*. * The balance was spent by them in meeting the little wants of the poor and the orphans at Lahore and in otherwise utilising it in the service of the *sangat*.

There were three young widows belonging to a high caste Khatri family in their street, who had no means of maintenance for themselves. Suhagbai took them under her care, maintained them and at odd intervals taught them Gurmukhi characters and gradually brought them on to the Guru's path. Another poor man's house had burnt down and he had no means to rebuild it. Winter was approaching when Suhagbai sold her ornaments which she had never used now and, with their proceeds, rebuilt a small shelter for the destitute and his family.

This attempt at meeting the wants of the poor and forlorn was their daily occupation

* $\frac{1}{5}$ th of income ordained, as a principle of Sikhism, to be devoted to religious and charitable purposes.

in the afternoon ; and in the evening they attended the congregation where they listened to the recitation of *Rahras* (evening prayer), or at times they performed this service at home. After dinner, the night prayers were said, and they retired to rest.

During the winter, following upon their arrival home, a heavy cyclone passed over Lahore and a large number of houses tumbled down and were in fact rased to the ground. A large number of families had left no place for shelter for themselves, nearly ten of whom Suhagbai admitted into her house and provided for nearly a hundred more in the houses belonging to other Sikhs. This sojourn of more than hundred families in Sikh homes made a very healthy influence on the society, and the ever pure atmosphere of Sikh homes attracted no less than seventy of the said families positively into the Sikh fold.

About a year after their arrival at home, Suhagbai gave birth to a son. Now came the time for Suhagbai to recollect the words of the Satguru, and be it said to her credit that in right earnest religious spirit she commenced nursing the baby, as a guest

sent to her by the Satguru. She thus continued free from the trammels of worldly attachments, and the child also was properly looked after and grew up influences. Although, the nursing of the baby took up a considerable part of her time, yet she rarely missed the congregations, and never ignored her daily *nit nem* (routine of religious services).

Thus were passed six more months. She now desired to have a sight of the Satguru, but, without permission she dared not start. Some Sikhs, however, came from Goindwal and delivered the message that the Lord had desired them to proceed to Goindwal, as He was intending to proceed on a preaching tour and wished to see them before his departure. They immediately set out and in due course reached Goindwal. There they placed their child at the holy feet, and the Satguru in His Supreme joy, remarked that "the child would be a beloved of the Satguru and would prove a redeemer of a large number of the lost ones of the world." He was named Maniya. They followed, along with others, the Satguru in His tour and enjoyed the privileges of holy company

for six months. After completion of the tour, they were permitted to return home.

In Lahore, the old routine was resumed, and time began passing in rapid succession.

One morning, Bhai Mahnga was returning home from the riverside, when a feeble cry reached his ears from a thicket, a little further away from the road. He hastened towards it and found that two sturdy roughs were maltreating a young woman and were snatching away her jewelry from her person.

Bhai Mahnga at once bowed to them and gently asked them not to oppress the woman. "Why do ye friends maltreat a weak woman," he said; "do not be cruel to her and let her go. If you want money, come along with me and I shall give it to ye!" But the robbers were apparently not in a mood to listen to him. Their hearts were blackened with the root of sin, and the low and humble sound of duty could reach them not. Mahnga then held them by the arm and in the Name of the Almighty asked them to let her go. In so doing, he also received a few fist blows, but he thrust himself between them and the woman, till for once the woman was released from their evil grasps.

He at once extended his arms and clasped them in his embrace. They also grappled with him and a mutual struggle began. To the woman, he cried out, "mother, take thy ornaments and run away!" She immediately took up the ornaments that had been snatched from her and were now lying on the ground and ran off. The robbers tried hard to be released, but Mahnga kept his hold fast on them and continued the struggle till the woman was safely out of reach. They beat him severely and he suffered it with patience, but did not loosen his grasp on them for some time and when eventually he released them, the woman had reached the town. In extreme rage, the robbers once more pounced upon him like a baffled lion, and struck him most ruthlessly, till he fell down senseless on the ground.

Bhai Mahnga was now bleeding all over his body and was lying unconscious in the thicket, while none at home was aware of his condition. The saved woman, however, mentioned to her neighbours immediately on her arrival, that she had been saved by a Sikh whom she did not know and that very likely the robbers would not spare his life.

The news spread like wild-fire, and some Sikhs hastened towards the thicket with big sticks in their hands. They searched in the thicket for some time, and eventually came upon the unconscious body of Bhai Mahnga, whom they immediately brought home. A surgeon was at once summoned and the wounds were washed and dressed. He was also given some restoratives and tonics, and he became conscious with the returning consciousness, the expressions "Blessed is the Satguru," "God be praised," were heard from his lips. His devoted wife now proved equal to the occasion. She did not lose heart. She served her husband most intelligently, and other Sikhs also rendered all possible help. Nothing was left wanting in the way of treatment and nursing, but recovery seemed not in sight.

Bhai Mahnga now longed to go to the Satguru. To him it was immaterial whether he died or lived, but a *darshan* * of the Lord he wanted to have. A stretcher was at once engaged and he was placed on it. A few of the *sangat* and Mai Suhagbai accompanied him, and he was taken to Goindwal and

* Sight.

brought into the holy Presence. This meeting with the Satguru had a salutary effect in Mahnga, and in time the wounds healed and he began to pick up strength. The *sangat* then left for home but Bhai Mahnga prayed to the Lord and said "O Gracious Lord! I now realise that I have few days left to me in this life! shouldst Thou so permit, I wish I could pass my remaining days at Thy Holy Feet!"

The Satguru smiled and said, "the days are ever numbered, Mahnga; it is only the last scene that remains, well, stay!"

Bhai Mahnga stayed there for another month; but his strength failed and the end came in sight. The Satguru, the omniscient came and sat at his death bed, and placed His hand on his forehead. During this holy touch, his spirit, in full consciousness, absorbed itself in the supreme, and left its earthly coffin vacant. None wept, because a "Gurmukh* cometh and goeth in perfect freedom." All had firm faith in this Supreme Destiny. Under other circumstances, perhaps, the shock may have been too heavy for Suhag-

* A holy personage, one who treads on the path of the Guru.

bai but in the presence of the Satguru she wavered not. Her Faith and Trust in God remained firm and constant. Bhai Mahnga was gone, and his body was consigned to the fire at the riverside and ashes swept away by the river itself.

Those that know of the Departure,
Why should they simulate?
Why dost thou not know the fact of Departure,
Which (knowledge) may serve Thy Purpose?

VIII

My forehead is branded, for I owe heavy debt
to the Guru :

He hath done great benevolence to me,
And led me across the unsteerable ocean of
Fear.

Gauri M. 4, sh. 59.

After Bhai Mahnga's demise, Suhagbai came home, where Mai Malan paid her a visit of condolence. The virtuous influence of Mai Malan in the Majha villages had done wonderful work, and she could hardly be spared from her diocese. But Malan thought that Suhagbai, in her affliction, might require consolation and support from outside. So she came and saw her. Suhagbai, however, was neither disconsolate nor pensive in mind. On the other hand, she proved firm in her Faith and unflinching in her devotion. She engaged herself regularly in introspection. She became steady in *Vyrág*. Mai Malan now found that Suhagbai had made wonderful progress in her divine contemplations and renunciation of Ego. Now she had greater leisure from her household

affairs, which, so far as they went, continued on the same lines as were adopted by her husband ; and thus became more staunch and energetic in her benevolent pursuits.

Maniya grew rapidly, but here again she swerved not from the orders of the Satguru that he was to be nursed and served as a Sikh guest, and not as a son. Her *biradri** murmured for a while as she had not observed the customary full mourning on account of her husband's death ; but none dared approach her on the point. She was not prepared to listen to these voices of the world—, voices that sneer and mock and condemn, voices that take a cruel pleasure in saying just the one thing that will wound and crush an aspiring spirit. But what had they really to do with her ? Was she to be moved from her course by casual opinion ? She cared not whether this person or that person approved or disapproved her actions. Thus determined, she realised the religious peace she was looking after.

Guru Amardas has been a Mighty Teacher and an unparalleled benefactor of suffering humanity, who bestowed spiritual

* Literally brotherhood, Kith and kin.

bliss in an unstinted measure on all who approached Him, and was the very embodiment of compassion. He loved the Sikhs most ardently and spared no pains to lead them across the fearful ocean of materialism. In different parts of the country he had established gifted apostles of high sterling merit to spread the tidings of spiritual benefaction. There were also, as has been stated before, lady apostles of great foresight and intuitive knowledge who were told off to work amongst the womenfolk. Let it, however, be remembered that these apostles presided on no independent schools of their own. They took up the work of teaching as a service, and under the guidance of the great Teacher Himself. They redeemed the worst sinners from their nefarious habits, taught them a sense of duty, and when, tears of repentance had washed off their impurities, brought them before the Satguru to be initiated into the path of spirituality. The Guru was the great Master and the followers were all Sikhs; and these apostles considered themselves privileged to serve both. They had first themselves passed through severest ideals and suffered greatest strains. They

had been washed of all their impurities and had been steeped deep in the dye of *satsang*.^{*} They had gained the knowledge of Self and had developed an extreme love of God. They had learnt to realise the root principles of Unity, Brotherhood and Forgiveness. When they had done all that, then were they commissioned off to do their apostolic duties. The world's wealth and the world's beauty could not therefore subdue them. Knowledge of self and love with the supreme spirit had become a firm habit with them, and therefore they always remained unshaken in *Vyrag*, and the world's pains and pleasures could not affect them. To maintain a principle, they never faltered to lay down their lives. They never soiled their lips by speaking scandal or a harsh word. On the other hand, they loved their opponents and did them good. Their integrity, gentility and benevolence were acknowledged by Hindus and Muhammadans alike. They were also respected by Government. Once Akbar himself came to Goindwal to visit the Satguru, and when he listened to the words of truth, love and peace, that were spoken by Sri

* Company of pious and holy personages.

Guru Amardas, he offered to attach a *jagir** to the *langar*, but the Satguru refused to accept it and had public taxes on the people of the *Ilaga*† reduced instead.

The chief work of the Guru's Apostles, both male and female, lay in preparing people for the everlasting bliss, which flows from a knowledge and love of the Creator, and these pages contain a sample of the work done by one of them. This scene from the life and work of Mai Malan has been presented to the public to explain the method of work adopted by these Apostles and the condition of the Sikh society which had then prevailed. Mai Malan had charge of the diocese of Kasur, but, prudent and energetic as she was, on occasions she stepped beyond her limits as well to perform some act of humble service. After a few days' stay at Lahore, Mai Malan went to Patti *via* Kasur.

Suhagbai, firm and resolute in her bereavement, began her benevolent career, in accordance with Mai Malan's programme, with the addition of a *langar*, where all travellers were welcome to dine at all hours

* An assignment of land revenue.

† A countryside.

of the day. She also maintained a few orphans at her own expense.

One night, as Mai Suhagbai was retiring to bed, it occurred to her that all near relations of her husband and herself were still plunged deep in materialism, and that perhaps her first duty was to serve those whom Providence had connected with her husband and herself by ties of blood. Was she right in stopping all intercourse with them, because they understood not the Divine Message? How many on this earth had really understood it? The same night she made up her mind that they shall not be all left behind, without an attempt being made to redeem them.

Her husband's brother's wife was lying ill for some time. Next morning Mai Suhagbai went to see her. They were surprised at it and even jeered at her, but she minded not their murmurs. The lady's treatment was in proper hands, but none cared for her proper nursing. Mai Suhagbai took up this duty and performed it most cheerfully till the lady's complete recovery.

Now all her relations began to love and respect her. She had proved really useful to

them, and was no longer an outcast. Their relationship became most cordial and she thus got the opportunity of instilling high spiritual lessons in their minds, by example as well as precept. The result of her patient work was that the entire circle of her relations, both blood and marriage, became Sikhs, and the *satsang* congregations became popular in Lahore.

It should be again stated here that, midst all the beneficent work she did, she never attached herself to any body or any thing in such a manner as to feel the pinch of separation from them. She always lived an independent life. She sympathised with others and served and consoled them, but never was she carried away by an idea of egotism. The society also respected and loved her instead of eschewing her as before; and instead of not molesting her for fear of the Diwan, they now began to assist her positively. Her income also increased by prudent and better management of her property, but she confined her personal requirements to the same old standard and spent the enhanced income also on works of public utility.

There lived in Lahore in these days a Military Officer of great wealth but a fiery and fierce temperament. Dungar Mal, for this was his name, had great influence at Court, and was often absent from home on military expeditons. He had no offspring, though he had married four wives, and for the supposed offence of barrenness he used to ill-treat his wives. Once, Providence granted him a son from the womb of his most junior wife, but the child died of small-pox while Dungar Mal was away at Multan. He came home in great fury and asked why the son had died. The lady remained quiet for sometime but then she also added that she could not help it, as the child was afflicted with small-pox. This enraged Dungar, with the result that he beat her to death. His influence at Court, however, saved him from prosecution.

He then married another wife who also presented him with a son two years later. Dungar was sent out to Kabul on business, and was still in Kabul when Mai Suhagbai had returned to Lahore and taken up the apostolic work there. It so happened that this child of Dungar also died while he was

away. The child's mother, to whom the fate of her predecessor was well-known, felt shocked. Her elder sister was an acquaintance of Suhagbai whose discourses she used to attend. So she advised her not to shriek and publish the sad news, and then took Suhagbai to her. Mai Suhagbai heard her story and gave it her best consideration but could not solve the difficulty. The problem was really insoluble, for it was well-known that Dungar would mete out a similar treatment to her as he had done to his first son's mother. This disappointing reply of Suhagbai gave a still severer shock to the lady and she became unconscious. Suhagbai grew sad and tried hard to think till presently an idea struck her and she told the lady when she recovered to compose herself and God would protect her. She had solved the problem! She told her to make over the deceased child's body to her and asked the lady's sister to accompany her to a place where she promised to deliver her own living child to her. She also told her to utter not a word, neither truth nor lie, about the matter and pull on in complete silence. As the death of the child was yet not known elsewhere,

no body else could think of questioning about it and the matter would thus be smoothed over. She promised to dispose of the deceased's body herself. Both the sisters were amazed at this example of complete renunciation and benevolence. They thanked her deeply with folded hands but refused to accept the proposal, as it was taking too much from her. The lady would patiently suffer her destined fate, but they could not cheat the Mai of her only son. Suhagbai smiled and said. "It is not my son, dear sisters. He is only a Sikh of the Satguru who is staying with me as a guest. So if my guest departs from my house in full satisfaction, I shall be relieved of an onerous duty. Should I consider him as my son, I break the laws of my spiritual preceptor. And if now, I can save a life by giving away that son, do I not just avail of an opportunity to fulfil the orders of the Satguru? My own body even is not mine, then how is the child born of my body mine? My husband died the other day. Have I been able to help it? Had he been mine, he would have lived with me. Should this child similarly die, shall I prevent it? If he can be alienated from me by Death,

can I feel his separation if he goes away from me in life. I therefore gladly present the boy to you and you should no longer be anxious on my account. Rest assured I shall never recall to my mind that I had ever given my son to any body. I shall, on the other hand, be thankful to thee, my sister," and she looked to Dungar's wife, "that thou hath relieved me of an onerous duty."

In short, after some discussion, the resolution was adopted. She took away the dead child and sent her living one to Dungar's wife; and next morning cremated the child's body in the presence of her Sikh friends. She uttered not a word as to who had died and if any body referred to the incident she kept quiet. If any body insisted to know of the cause of her son's death, she gave the vague reply that her son had not died, but had merely gone to another mother, and it was not her child that had been cremated but that was an alien. Her listeners always seemed to attach spiritual meanings to these expressions, and kept quiet.

This benevolence had such an influence on Dungar's wife that she felt an attraction towards that spiritual gift which had pro-

duced so much contentment in Suhagbai. She began visiting Suhagbai and listening to her discourses. Her mode of life was entirely reformed, and she found a place in the list of Suhagbai's friends. The child had been weaned from the breast of a *satsangi* mother and had gone over to suck the milk of a woman of the world, but that milk was also reformed for him by the contact of *satsang*.

The lady's husband also came home in time, but he could not distinguish the child as a stranger. He regarded him as his own and began to love him as such. He also found this wife as of reformed habits, respectful behaviour and gentle manners. This enhanced his love for her, and she too gradually began to entertain feelings of love for him, rather than those of fear.

One day, they were sitting together and were speaking to each other in affectionate terms. The woman, who was yet a novice in the spiritual path, commenced talking of the beauties of *satsang* and while speaking of the sacrifices of the selfless workers on this path, mentioned, by way of example, the story of the child ! Oh,—Dungar was at

once filled with rage, and began to strike her. He then, in heated fury, drew his sword and ran towards Suhagbai's house. Suhagbai was at the time reciting her evening prayers on the upper story. Dungar thrust open the street door and rushed up the stairs and finding an innocent lady reciting her prayers on the roof enquired if she was Suhagbai; she nodded assent, and he raised his sword and said, "tell me the truth or else I would kill thee."

"Why do you enquire the truth by force?" she replied, "Truth is always Fearless! Fear produceth only deceit and falsehood!"

Just as a strong wave strikes against a rock and rushes back, so did Dungar's resentment receive a rude check by this fearless reply. But, in his foolhardiness, he again said, in a threatening tone "make haste, or I will kill thee."

"If you wish to take my life, then take it," and Mai Suhagbai bent her head a little, "but if you want to enquire the truth, then put your sword in the sheath and sit down. I will tell you truthfully what you would ask!"

Dungar's heart trembled and he was amazed at the perfect equanimity of the lady. A few small orphans, whom the lady brought up, were playing at a little distance and they ran up to and embraced the lady when they saw Dungar's drawn sword. Dungar, on seeing this, involuntarily sheathed his sword. Now she gave him a stool and asked him to sit down.

Dungar most insultingly asked her why she had exchanged her son with his.

Suhagbai said, "pray excuse me I confess my guilt for I did wrong, in taking a dead child and giving up a living one. I had considered *your* benefit in it, and if it is a loss to you, then I admit my mistake."

Dungar felt irritated. "Loss!" he said, "is it no loss that a low born child has been introduced into my high family! "

"True," she said, "this had not then occurred to me. But it is not yet past remedy. Pray send him back! "

Dungar boiled with rage and gnashed his teeth.

"What should I do?" he furiously asked. "It puts me out that women are so great tricksters."

“ True,” said she, “ but blessed are the men who still protect these worthless creatures.”

“ What now ? ” Dungar queried.

“ As is thy will,” replied she.

“ I would kill my wife this very day ! ”

“ Because the previous murder has remained unpunished and these ladies belong to poor families, or for any other reason as well ? ”

On hearing this, Dungar’s heart succumbed. His secret was now betrayed. He at once came to his senses, for the lady had some influence at the Diwan’s and might be the cause of his disgrace. He felt himself completely in her power and now tried to humour her.

“ What is the reason of thy equanimity of mind and fearlessness ? ” he asked.

“ Truth,” she replied.

“ Tell me what should I do now ? ”

“ Adopt the Truth ! ”

“ To whom I have been false ? ”

“ To thyself ; ”

“ How ! ”

“ Thou presumest to be a hero,” she replied, “ and yet hast killed an unprotected

weak woman ! thou hast thus played false to thyself. Again thou believest thyself as Dungar, the body composed, as it is, of flesh, blood and bones. This is not correct. Thou art not really flesh. This body of flesh lieth at night like a corpse, and thou eatest and drinkest and moveth in dream. Thou art not thus flesh. This is thy false supposition, whereby thou deceivest thyself, next thou believest thyself of high lineage ? If thou, during infancy, hadst been brought up in a sweeper's family, thou wouldst have believed thyself as low, and if a Pandit had brought thee up thou wouldst have posed as of a still higher caste. Thus this low and high caste are mere matters of supposition and are not a reality. Thou art the same under both conditions. The distinction of caste does not really exist in thee. So, whoever, being free of caste, considers himself bound up in its trammels, is false to himself. In thy real nature, thou art free of rage, etc. Thou art not Rage. Rage is a *chandal*.* And thou hast united thyself with this *chandal* and hast rushed forward to kill me. Thy inner self was tell-

* A very low, detestable caste.

ing thee that it was wrong, but overcome with rage thou wast no longer thy own master. Dost thou think that this body of thine, which hath raised the sword, would exist for ever? Shall it not mix in dust? Were not thy ancestors like thee? Where are they now? Thou knowest well that they have died and so wilt thou die! But thou doest deeds which show that thou doest not believe thyself mortal. What it is, if it is not playing false to thyself?"

These words puzzled him. His vanity was severely shocked. The piercing words of an innocent spiritualist hit him in heart. His belief in illusive things was rudely shaken, and the layer of dirt, which had covered the real spirit, was cracked. But he persisted in his obstinacy and hesitatingly asked again how it was that she, a woman, had remained constant and undaunted in face of a drawn sword.

"This body is ephemeral," she said, "and spirit is everlasting. I have turned my back upon the transient, and have become fixed in the Everlasting. Desire for the sustenance of the transient and a fear of its destruction have both vanished. Therefore I

have gained Fearlessness. Thou couldst at thy best kill the transient, which has to come to an end. 'The spirit is Deathless. Thy sword could not wound it!'

"Why hast thou broken thyself from the transient," asked Dungar.

"The transient is full of errors. From the smallest worm to the highest enjoyments of heaven, all are transient and full of errors. I have therefore withdrawn myself from them entirely."

"Why didst thou give thy son to my wife," he asked.

"Because he too was transient. To me, his being or not being made no difference. But for thy wife his being was the cause of her safety, honour and happiness. That was my reason of giving the child away. Subsequently, thy wife also joined the *satsang* and loved the truth. If she had not told thee the truth and maintained the lie that it was thy son, thou wouldst have continued happy with her. Just as dung-worms are attached to the dung, so do people of lie approve of falsehood. Just as the dung-worm dieth midst fragrant scent, so thou, a false being, burnt thyself in the fire of thy wife's truth,

and rushed forward to kill with thy drawn sword those that had taken shelter at the Truth. But the Truth hath blunted thy sword and cooled thy rage. Thou mayst now be obstinate in not admitting it, but thou knowest that thou wast in the wrong."

"True it is," he said, "but where shall I learn it?"

"Take to *satsang*."

"With whom?"

"With thy wife."

"Really or art thou joking?"

"Really. I cannot joke with thee."

"Ah, Mother, I have done wrong!" said Dungar in a miserable tone.

"Nay, brother," said she, "I have been in the wrong, for it was on account of my action that thou hath suffered pain."

Dungar hastily touched Suhagbai's feet and rushed down the stairs.

By practising mercy, humility and contentment,
Disease attacketh not, nor doth the Yama*
trouble!

Gauri M. 1.

— १८८८११११ —

* The messenger of death.

IX -

I enquire from the "Wife," how hath she
won the Lord ?

"My True Beloved hath shown mercy to me,
and I abandoned 'mine' and 'thine';

"Mind, body and soul should be entrusted
to God: Thus, sisters, can we unite
Should our Lord look upon us in Love, then
shall our spirits, says Nanak, unite with
the Supreme !"

On the fourth day after this, Mai
Suhagbai was sitting in deep communion, at
early dawn, when she saw the vision of a
Sikh, who said to her, "Bibi, why dost thou
not go to Goindwal ? Satguru is remembering
thee !"

The Mai opened her eyes and found no
Sikh. Her heart, however, felt a magnetic
attraction towards the Satguru, and her mind
became galvanised. Her eyes were filled
with tears and in that condition of extreme
concentration she was absorbed in the
Divine. During this second absorption, the
same figure of a Sikh appeared to her again

and gave her the same message. She could no longer resist the attraction and started the same evening in a bullock-cart, which took her a distance of 18 miles before nightfall. She reached Goindwal in the afternoon of the third day, washed at the Baoli, ate at the *langar* and then prepared *parshad** for the Satguru. The Satguru was at this time sitting at the riverside with Bhai Jetha† and a couple of other Sikhs. Mohri, the second son of the Satguru, was also present. Sohagbai took up *parshad* and proceeded towards the river. In the way, she met Mohan ji (the eldest son of the Satguru) who was hastening towards his own *chaubārd*.‡ The Mai bowed to him. He smiled and said “By serving, have they taken it away!” ‘Taken away’ was repeated by him several times while he hurried his footsteps homewards. The Mai with heart full of high sentiment of Love, reached where Satguru was sitting, presented the *parshad* and bowed to Him, when the Lord raised her head from the ground and remarked :

* A kind of sweet, used as offering by the Sikhs

† Jetha was the original name of Guru Ram Das ji, the Fourth Guru of the Sikhs.

‡ Closet.

Truth, gentility, purity and abstinence make
thy family ;

Ever, day and night, is she high, saith Nanak,
who entertaineth love for her Lord !

The Satguru then looked towards
Jethaji who was massaging his feet but
had receded on Suhagbai's arrival and he
began rubbing the right foot while Suhagbai
attended the left.

The Satguru looked towards the river
and then closed His eyes. Strange that when
He ultimately opened His eyes, they were
full of tears ! But who could venture to look
up or enquire ? All sitting there, however, be-
came sad !

After a short interval the Satguru sang,
in extreme gratitude and love, the following
hymn in praise of *Sri Guru Angad Devji.

I sacrifice myself, I immolate myself, O brother,

I ever give myself up to the Satguru !

Who hath given me the Treasure of Name,
O brother, by Guru's grace I am absorb-
ed in bliss.

Then he kept quiet.

Bhai Jetha's heart became full and his
eyes were filled with tears. His spirit soared
high and was enraptured in Divine music.
The Satguru was himself in communion with

* 2nd Guru, in succession to Guru Nanak.

his Spiritual Predecessor, and the *Sangat* was entranced by the resonant voice of Bhai Jetha's high musical strains.

In my mind is the everlasting hope, how
may I see Thee, my Lord !

Whoever hath loved may know the love of
God in my heart !

I am sacrifice to my Guru who hath united
me with my Creator from whom I had
separated.

My God ! I the sinner have come to Thy Door.
Without virtue I am, and that filthy, be Thou
merciful !

Many, many are my sins, more and still more,
O Lord, they cannot be counted ;

Thou art the Good and the Merciful, mayst
Thou, in Thy will, grant forgiveness !

Me, the sinner, Thou hast admitted to the
Guru's *Sangat*, which hath taught me of
Thy Name, O Liberator !

How shall I praise Thee, my Satguru, when
Thou speakest, I marvel ;

Who entertaineth sinners like me, as Thou,
my Satguru, hast entertained and
liberated ?

Thou, Guru, art my father, thou art my
mother, thou art my relation and friend !

Whatever was happening with me, my
Satguru, Thou Thyself knowest it all !

I was wandering about and nobody cared for me, but thou, Satguru, hast established worms like me in Thy holy company.

Blessed, blessed is the Nanak Jan (Guru Amar Das), by meeting whom my sorrow and pains have all vanished !

This song enthralled the *Sangat*. It was now late in the night and the moon came out in all its glory. After this the evening prayers were recited by the Ragees and *Ardas* was offered to the Almighty.

The *Sangat* came home a little later, and the *langar* was distributed.

The Satguru was so merciful this day that after dinner he again came out into the congregation, which assembled and * *kirtan* began and continued up to 2 o'clock. The *Sangat* then went to wash, and at the third watch of the night the † *Isadi var* was commenced. The *kirtan* continued till sunrise. Who could understand the doings of the Lord ?

After the morning *langar* was served up. The Lord addressed some words of high spirituality to the *Sangat*, when some people from Kabul and Bukhara were also present.

* Music in which only hymns in praise of the Almighty are sung

† Hymns out of the Guru Granth, sacred book of the Sikhs—recited or sung in the morning

All of a sudden, a tall young man, with a drawn sword in hand, entered the congregation and passing through all reached the Divan where he placed his sword at the feet of the Lord and then prostrated himself before Him ! He wept and cried, " Oh Satguru, keep away this Demon from me, and teach me to be true to myself ! People practise deceit and treachery with others, I have always practised them with myself. But it is all due to this sinful sword. Pray secure it and put me with the dogs at Thy door ! "

The *Sangat* was amazed and this scene bewildered them, but the Satguru remained unmoved. When the man got up, the Satguru enquired, " Have you taken food at the *langar* ? " He replied, " I had done so last night, O Lord ! For I had learnt that no new pilgrim could see Thee without eating at the *langar* ! Last night my fate has kept me wandering about at the river side in search of Thee, and I have strayed away, I know not where. Pray engage me now as a dog at Thy door. I can only serve by barking." So saying, he wept bitterly, till he was hoarse.

On this, the all-merciful Lord became gracious and enquired where Mai Suhagbai

was. The *Mai* at once presented herself respectfully.

The Lord then said, " Daughter mine, see if this was the sword which had been drawn to decapitate thee. "

" Thou knowest all, O true king ! " said she.

The Satguru then told that rough man to state all his story in the congregation.

He related his whole story.

When the *Sangat* heard of Suhagbai's gift of a son, of that man's attempt to kill her and Suhagbai's gentility and humility which cooled down his anger, had taught him of spiritual consciousness, tears came into their eyes, and all began repeating " Wahiguru " Wahiguru ! " Amazement and praise seized all.

How shall the evil-doer fare ?

He shall burn in his own anger !

Self-willed and mad, he shall waste his life.

The Gurmukh shall know all.

Gurmukh traineth his mind, saith Nanak !

He then called the *Mai* near Himself, put His hand on her head and said, " Thy attempts have borne fruit ! thou hast fulfilled thy Orders, inasmuch as thou didst not deal

with a son as thy own ! Now the “ wifehood ” of Suhagbai * hath been achieved. With thee, numerous others will be saved ! God shall never ignore thee ! Go and, free of egotism and attachment, do thou live in Lahore and save others. Make thyself useful to others ! ”

So saying, He gave her a *siropao*,† and she was counted as one of 52 Gurmukh lady Apostles. She lived long in Lahore performing benevolent deeds and raising others spiritually.

To Dungar, who had run up to Goindwal on account of his wife’s teachings, the Satguru also became merciful. He was admitted into Sikhism and the Satguru fixed his sword in his waist. “ The sword is not to be blamed,” the Satguru said. “ All blame lieth with thy evil mind. Thou knewest not how to use it, and thou blamest the arms ? It is an article to be used for the protection of religion and the oppressed, and not for the killing of wives and benevolent people ! ”

After a short pause, the Satguru continued, “ Go and build a Dharamsala in Lahore and serve the travellers and visitors

* Suhag itself means wifehood.

† *Khilat*.

there, with thy own hands. Be humble, fan the assemblies and serve them with food. Deal honestly. All corrupt acquisitions of the past should be restored to their sources, as far as possible. At leisure hours, prepare small booklets of Japji and distribute them freely, and find time daily to sit alone and pray to God. By following on this course for some time in complete humility, thy heart shall be purified of its filth."

His wife and the child had also come. They were also recipients of grace. And the Satguru said, "Bring this boy up to a perfectly regulated life. He is the son of a dutiful mother! Always please his mother who hath reformed your temporal as well as spiritual affairs. Ye whom she, the bounteous, hath given both son and souls are the supplicants at her door. No gift is superior to this!"

They carried out all these instructions fully. Dungar reached the self-conscious stage of spiritual progress, during the time of the 4th Guru. The child grew up into a dutiful boy, obedient to his adoptive parents, and faithful towards his real mother, whom he revered as his benefactress and a saint.

O dear reader, this is a story of the life of one of our old Sikhs ! Do thou also consider well, look to thyself and see if thou fulfillest all the requirements of a Sikh !

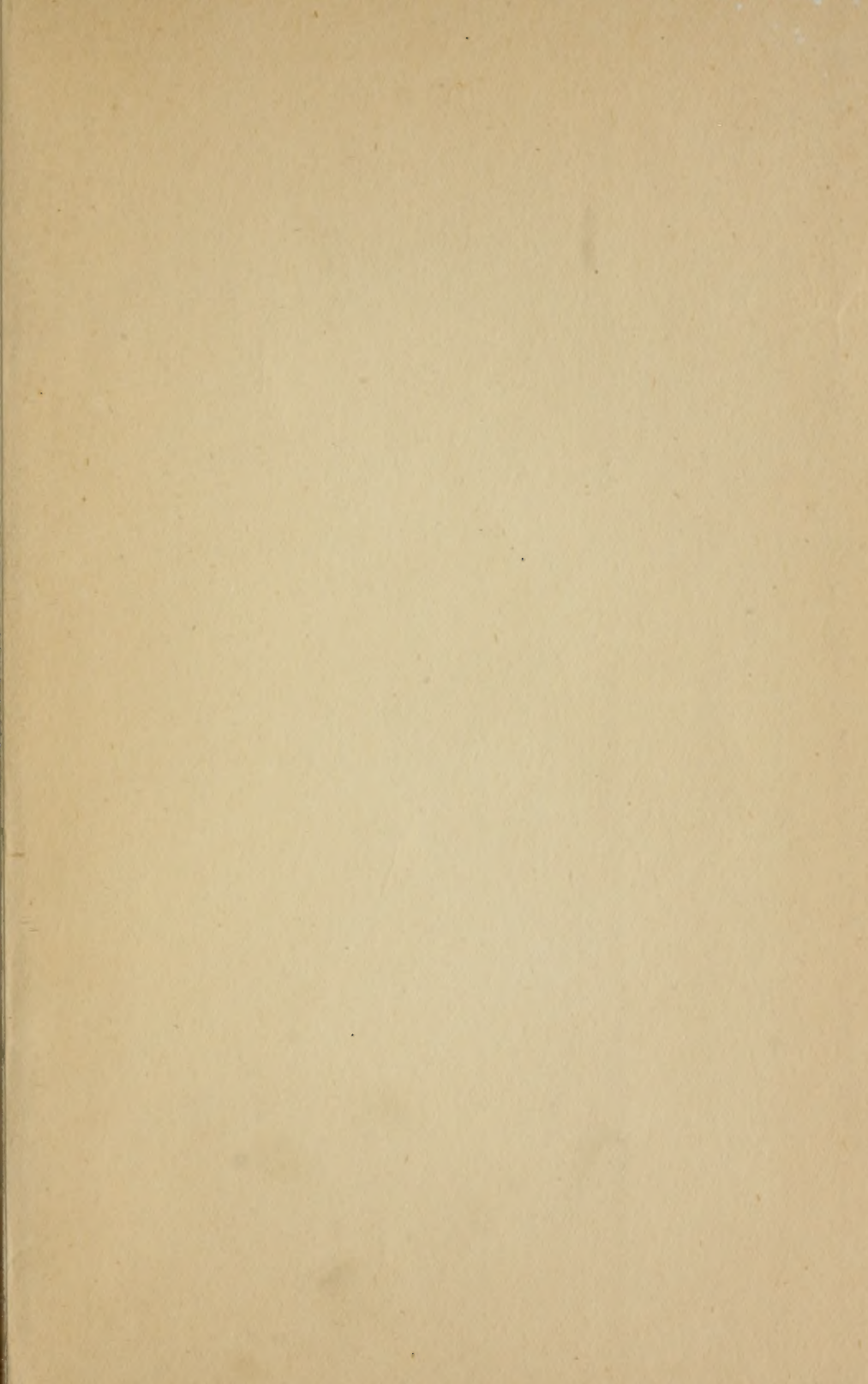
Remember that life is fleeting, death is approaching, work is great, and *sidhi** is distant.

So be up and doing and follow the lead of the Satguru, so that thou mayst be saved !

So may it be !

* Spiritual accomplishment.







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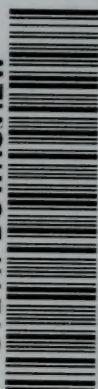
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